



THE BIBLE STORY
VOLUME 2
By SULAMITH ISH-KANOK

1456

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THE BIBLE STORY

PART II

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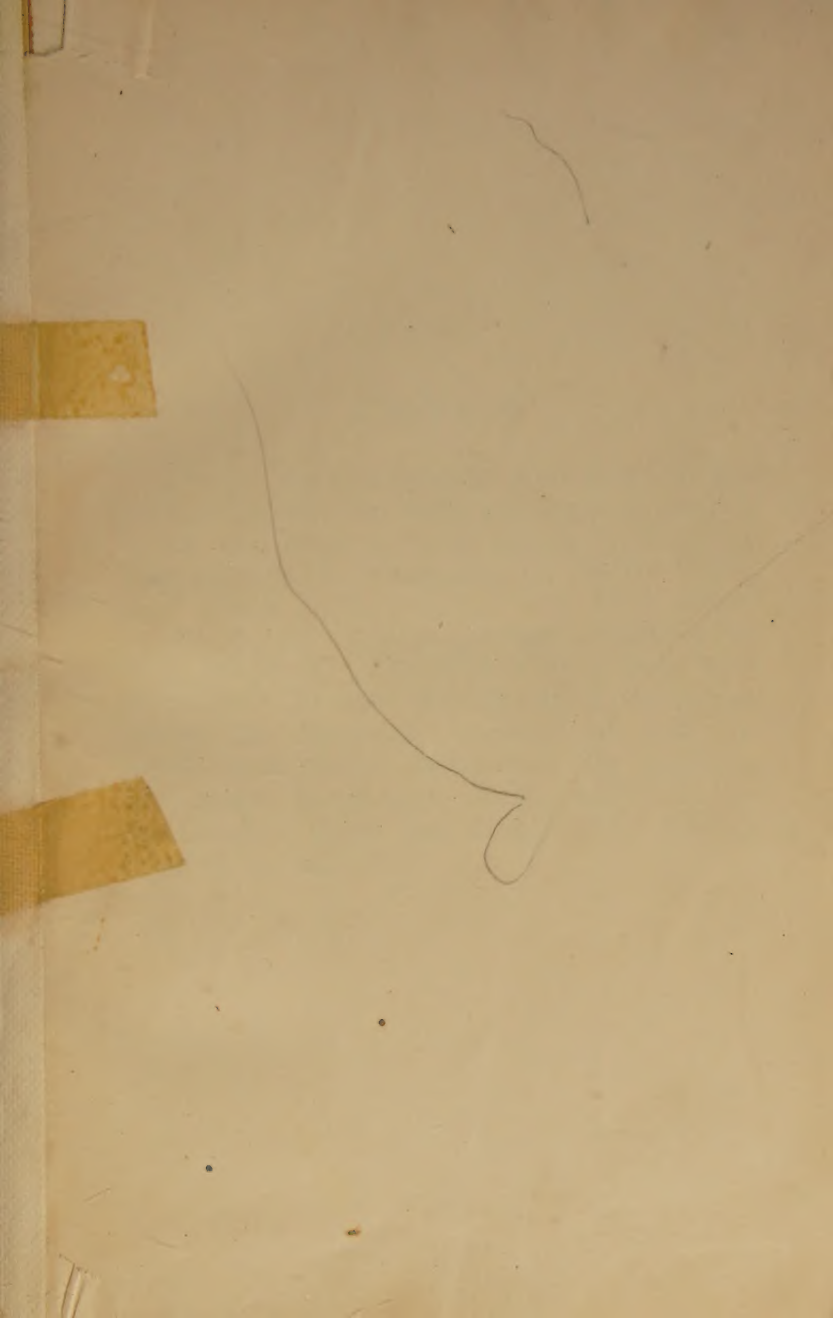
TOLD BY
SULAMITH ISH-KISHOR

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DEDICATED
TO
MY DEAR PARENTS

PREFACE

The author's purpose in preparing this text book is to tell the Bible stories in a manner which will have a ready appeal to children. The material is based directly on the Bible, and where interpretation has been found necessary, the Rabbinical interpretation has been followed. Quotations as a rule have been taken directly from the Bible, excepting where the language is involved and the words not easily understood by children. The maps, have been drawn especially for this book. They are simple, clear and of interest to children.

CHAPTER II

The first of the two main divisions of the subject is the history of the country. This is a very interesting and important part of the study, and it is one which has attracted the attention of many of the best writers of the day. The second division is the description of the country, and this is also a very important part of the study. The description of the country is a very interesting and important part of the study, and it is one which has attracted the attention of many of the best writers of the day.

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MAP OF THE WORLD

MAP OF THE WORLD

THE little black part is Palestine. What a tiny bit of the whole world it is! Who would think that that little speck of a country could be so important? But after all it is not size that matters; perhaps the brightest boy or girl in your school is also the smallest. From the people living in the little land called Palestine the whole world received the inspiration of faith in the one God; from the Ten Commandments which God gave to Israel, the whole world learned the laws of right and wrong. No faith is so pure, no morality so exalted, as the faith and morality of the Torah of the Jews.

Little England conquered one-fifth of the world by strength of her armies, but the Jewish ideals have spread over the whole earth, and can never be destroyed. So you see it is not size or physical strength that counts, but goodness and strength of character, and nobility of soul.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW THEY CONQUERED THE LAND

ACROSS the red sands of the desert, from the wild mountains and barren plains of the wilderness, the multitudes of the children of Israel traveled. And now they saw far off the River Jordan, moving in a slow, brown stream, on its downward path to the sea, and beyond the Jordan, they saw the sunny green fields of Canaan, and long, low hills, covered with olive-plantations and with grape-vines that looked misty purple and silver-gray in the distance.

But among the pleasant meadows and fertile hills they also saw the strong walls of fortified cities, the towers of defence, and the glittering armor of sentinels who paced day and night before the gates of the cities. And the children of Israel asked themselves, could they conquer this land?

Then God spoke to Joshua and said, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over the Jordan, thou and all this people. Every place that the sole of thy foot shall tread upon, I have given it to you, as I promised unto Moses. I will not fail thee or forsake thee; be strong and of good

courage . . . and do according to the law which Moses my servant commanded thee . . . then thou shalt have good success."

And Joshua's heart was strengthened and filled with courage, for God had promised Israel the victory. What difference did it make whether Israel were few in number? God was with them, and they would conquer.

Joshua sent out two spies to report on the condition of the land. The king of Jericho tried to capture the spies, for the Canaanites were very much afraid of Israel; but a woman named Rahab hid the spies under the flax-stalks on the roof of her house, and so they escaped. They returned to Joshua full of hope, for they had seen how the whole land of Canaan feared Israel.

Then Joshua commanded the people to prepare themselves, for in three days they would pass over the Jordan, to conquer the land which God had given them. And the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh remembered the promise they had made when they settled down in the land on this side of the Jordan; they left their homes and their families, and took their weapons and put on their armor, and joined the rest of the tribes.

With the priests of God in the lead, the massed armies of Israel went down to the bank of the Jordan. Raising the Holy Ark,

the priests stepped into the water, and behold! the waters that flowed from above became still, and piled themselves into a heap and the waters that flowed down to the sea kept on flowing away, and soon there was a clear space in the river-bed. Quickly the children of Israel crossed over,—the armed soldiers first, tramping heavily, and the thousands of women and children hurrying after them, until the last person had reached the other shore. Then the priests also passed over, and when they were safe on land, they lowered the Ark, and at once the upper waters began again to flow, and the river flowed on to the sea as if there had never been a space. And the people rejoiced at the miracle, for they knew that with God's help nothing could prevent them from conquering the land.

The Israelites encamped in the broad plain of Jericho, and pitched their tents. Not far off rose the tall walls of the city of Jericho, surrounded by palm-trees. But the massive gates were firmly closed; not a soul passed in or out, all day and night, for the Canaanites feared Israel, few and weak though they were in comparison to the armies of Canaan.

The children of Israel had no battering-rams, no weapons mighty enough with which to attack the fortified city of Jericho. But God said to Joshua, "I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof. And all

your soldiers shall march around the city, once a day for six days, and seven priests shall bear before the Ark seven rams' horns; and on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets, and all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city shall fall down flat."

From behind their gates and from their tower windows the inhabitants of Jericho watched the strange doings of the Israelites; they did not know whether to fear or to mock the silent army marching round their city. But on the seventh day, they were terrified, for they saw the seven trumpets being raised to the lips of the seven priests that went before the Ark, and they heard the loud, shrill blowing of the trumpets, and the deep, hoarse shouting of the multitudes of Israel. Then the earth rumbled, the lofty stone walls of Jericho rocked, swayed back and forth in their foundations, and finally crashed down in ruins before the armies of Israel!

The streets of Jericho lay open and defenceless; the inhabitants fled away into the city as the Israelites rushed in upon them. According to the command of God, the Hebrews burned the whole city to the ground, with its temples of idolatry and its images of false gods. God commanded that everything in the city should be destroyed, except the

silver and gold, which was to be consecrated to the Lord, and the Israelites strictly obeyed this command.

But something had gone wrong. When they went up to fight the little city of Ai, they were defeated and put to flight. So they knew that someone must have sinned against God. Who could it be? They gathered the whole people together, and cast lots to find the guilty one. The lot fell upon a man named Achan. When Achan saw that he was caught, he confessed that he had not been able to resist the temptation to steal a wedge of gold and a bag of silver pieces and a fine Babylonian mantle; he had kept them and buried them in the earth under his tent. Achan was properly punished for his sin, the treasures were dug up and burned, and the people went up again against the city of Ai, and this time they conquered it easily, for now there was no sin amongst them.

Town after town of Canaan fell before the brave armies of Israel. The fame of Joshua was now very great, and the Canaanites feared him greatly. Many of their kings tried to make treaties of peace with him, but God had forbidden Israel to make peace with the heathen. He had commanded His people to utterly destroy the idol-worshippers, to burn their cities, and to smash their idols.

Five important kings of Canaan now

formed a confederacy to attack Israel, but the people of Gibeon thought of a better idea. They did not hope to conquer Israel, so they planned a clever trick in order to save themselves. They chose a few of their men to act as ambassadors; these ambassadors put on torn and travel-stained garments and broken sandals, and carried mouldy bread and empty wineskins, to make it seem that they had traveled a great distance. Then they went to Joshua, and told him they had come from a very far land, and asked him to make a treaty of peace with them. Not knowing that they were from Canaan, Joshua made the treaty. When he found out who they were, he was very angry; he could not break his oath to be at peace with them, because he had vowed in the name of God; but he punished them by making them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Israelites.

Joshua now divided up the land among the tribes; he divided the conquered part, and gave orders as to how the unconquered part should be divided after it was conquered, for he knew that Israel would surely possess the whole of the land if they continued to obey God's law. Joshua blessed the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, because they had remembered their promise to leave their homes to fight



THE STORY OF THE GIBEONITES

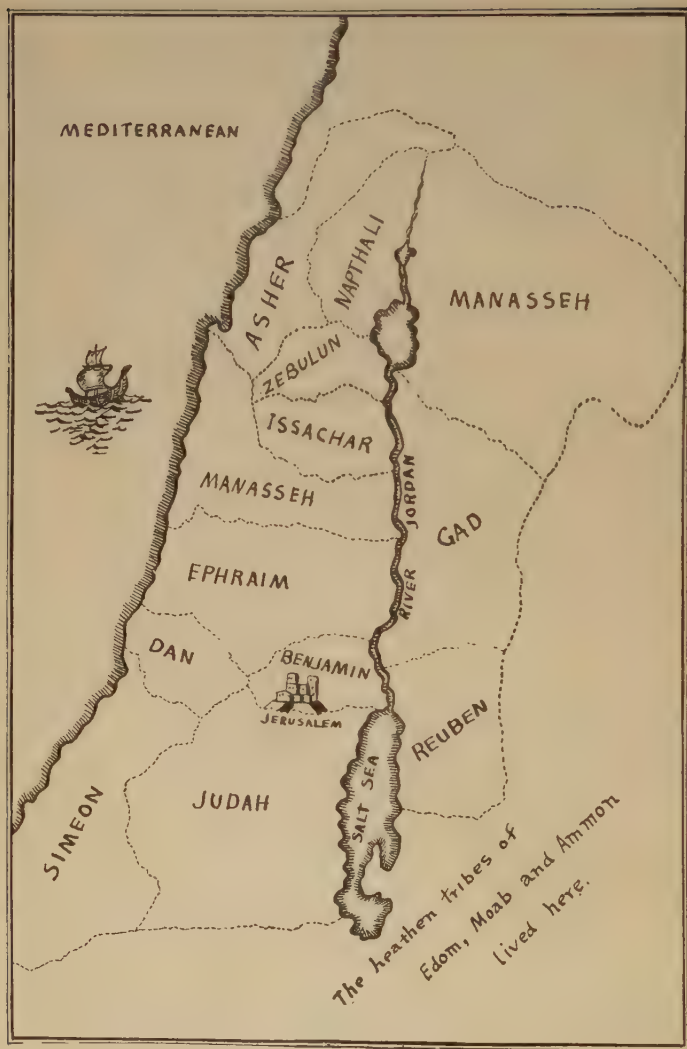
with the rest of the people; and he told them they could now return to their houses on the other side of the Jordan.

Joyfully they returned, and when they came to the other side of the Jordan, they built a great altar to show that all Israel was one nation, on both sides of the Jordan. But the other tribes were angry when they saw this altar. They felt that there should be only one altar—the altar of God. Indignantly the priests and princes of Israel went and bade them throw down their altar. But the Reubenites and Gadites and Manassites were surprised, and answered,

“The Lord knoweth if this altar was put up in rebellion, in order to turn away from following Him. We have done it in fear lest our children and grandchildren might forget the Lord; therefore, we said, ‘Let us build an altar for a witness, that our descendants may remember God.’” Then the priests and princes of Israel understood that the altar had been built for a good purpose, and they blessed the tribes, and journeyed back home.

Years passed, and Joshua felt that his time had come to die. Like all the great leaders of Israel, he gathered together all the multitudes of Israel, to give them his last blessing and advice. He reminded them of the miracles that God had performed for

them, and they swore to worship God forever, and never to bow to idols, and they swore also to follow all God's commandments. Then Joshua died, and the people buried him and mourned greatly.



Where the Tribes lived after Joshua died.

MAP 1

DIVISION OF LAND AT THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

AFTER Moses' death, Joshua became the leader of the children of Israel. He brought them across the Jordan, and they conquered a large part of the Holy Land. He then divided the land by lot among the tribes, as you see them in the map.

Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh are on the right side of the Jordan. You remember that these tribes promised to help their brethren conquer the other side of the Jordan, and they kept their promise. Then they returned to their wives and children on the other side of the river and settled there.

CHAPTER TWO

THREE EXCITING BATTLES

IT IS very hard for people to avoid doing bad things when they see other people doing them; that is one of the reasons why God commanded the Hebrews to break all the idols of the Canaanites, and to drive out the idolaters, so that they might not be tempted to turn away from their own belief in one holy, spiritual God.

As long as the Israelites remembered Joshua and the promise they had made to him, they worshipped only God, and they obeyed His law. But as years passed on, they forgot Joshua, and became careless about keeping the law. Instead of fighting all together, as one strong nation, the tribes fought separately, and did not help one another. They did not smash the idols, and they did not destroy the idolaters, but let them live as servants of Israel. The heathens kept on worshipping their idols, and gradually the Hebrews began to imitate them, because idolatry was much easier than the service of God; many Israelites turned away from God,

and worshipped false gods made by the hands of man. And God was very angry with Israel.

The nations around Israel, who had not been driven out according to God's command, now turned and fought the Hebrews; there were constant battles, and on many occasions the Hebrews were conquered, and they were made the servants of the heathens. They had to toil for their enemies, and to pay them tribute of gold and silver and cattle.

In their suffering, the Hebrews remembered God, who alone had power to deliver them; they turned from the idols, and prayed to Him. And God raised them up judges, wise men and brave in battle, who led them to victory. But they kept on sinning, and then repenting, over and over again.

The first judge, Othniel, conquered the King of Mesopotamia; after him came Ehud, who slew the King of Moab. Then the King of Canaan conquered the Hebrews, and oppressed them terribly. And there was no one to fight him.

At this time, a woman judged Israel; she was the prophetess Deborah, and she was very wise and brave. Calling the Hebrew general, whose name was Barak, she said to him, "Up, for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered the enemy into thy hand." But Barak hesitated; he knew that the King of Canaan had a mighty captain named Sisera,

and a very great army, and nine hundred iron chariots. So he said to Deborah,

"If thou wilt come with me, I will go." So Deborah went up with Barak and his army, and encouraged them, and they won a great victory over the Canaanites and their captain Sisera. And Deborah sang a beautiful song of praise and rejoicing. But because Barak had feared to go up without Deborah, the glory of the victory was not given to him.

The Israelites now had peace for forty years, but at the end of that time, the Midianites came down in multitudes and attacked them. The Hebrews had to run away and hide in the rocks and caves, while the Midianites took all their food and grain and cattle. Starving and hunted as they were, the Israelites cried out to God to save them, and God took pity on them.

There lived in the land of Ophrah a man named Gideon. One day, while he was beating out his grain in the winepress instead of on the threshing-floor, for fear lest the Midianites would see it and take it away, an angel of God appeared to him, and commanded him to go forth and save the people of Israel.

Gideon was a strong, brave man, but he was so meek in heart that he could scarcely believe that God had really chosen him to

save the people. So he prayed for a sign; the angel told him to prepare a kid and some unleavened cakes as a sacrifice to God, and place the sacrifice on a rock; and when it was prepared, the angel touched it with his staff, and flames came out of the rock and consumed the sacrifice. So Gideon knew that it was truly the angel of God who had appeared and had commanded him.

Now Gideon sent a rousing message through all the land, calling for soldiers, and more than thirty thousand flocked to his banner; they encamped on the hill overlooking the valley in which the Midianites were encamped. Gideon was very glad to have such a large army, but even as he rejoiced, God spoke to him and said,

"There are too many soldiers with thee; afterwards they will say that they gained the victory for themselves, and not through My power. Make a proclamation to the people, and say, 'Whoever feels any fear, let him go home.' " When the people heard the proclamation, more than twenty thousand of them went home, leaving Gideon with only ten thousand.

Gideon was satisfied, for ten thousand brave and enthusiastic soldiers are better than twenty thousand timid ones. But now again God spoke, and said, "There are still too many. Bring them down to the edge of

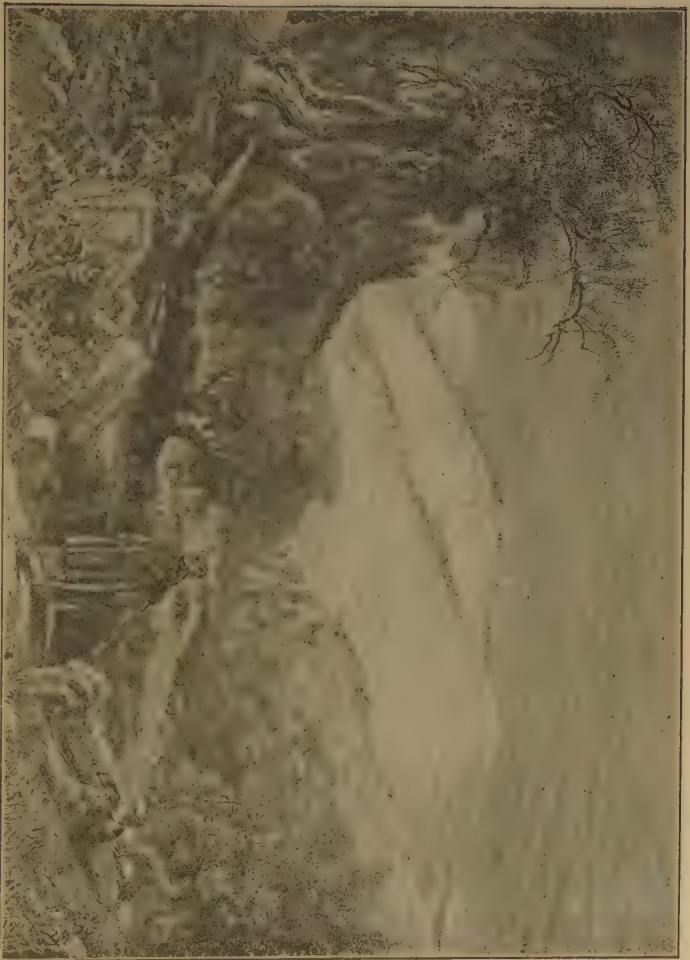
the water, and bid them drink; whoever laps the water with his tongue, shall stay with you, but whoever kneels down to drink, you shall send away." For only those who were accustomed to worshipping idols would kneel in order to drink.

Gideon was troubled when he saw that of all the multitudes, only three hundred lapped, while all the rest kneeled. But he felt such faith in God that he sent away all the others, and kept only the three hundred.

Now how were three hundred men to conquer a hundred thousand? God inspired Gideon with a wonderful plan. He divided his men into three companies, and spread out each company in a long, single line, each man being far apart from the others. Then he arranged the three companies like the three sides of a box, with the top line across the mountain, and the two others down its sides. To each man he gave a trumpet and a pitcher containing a lighted torch.

It was the dead of night. The Midianites were fast asleep in their tents in the valley below. Suddenly Gideon gave a signal: the Hebrew soldiers smashed their pitchers, blew their trumpets, roared and shouted, and waved their torches about, and dashed down upon the enemy. The Midianites awoke in terror, and were so frightened by the great noise and the lights, which waved on every side as if a

THE ASCENT TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES



great army were descending upon them, that they got up and ran away as fast as they could go. As they fled from their tents, the Hebrews pursued them, and the frightened enemy, unable to tell one from another in the dark, killed their own soldiers by thousands. When dawn came, many lay dead on the field, and the rest were fleeing away.

Weary but victorious, the little army of Hebrews came trudging back up the mountain. And the delighted Israelites came rejoicing to meet them, and they said to Gideon, "Be our king, and rule over us; thou and thy sons after thee." But Gideon said, "No, the Lord shall rule over you; He alone is your King." So Gideon became their judge, and ruled over them until he died.

After a time, the Ammonites came and made war upon Israel, and there was no one brave enough to lead the army against them. And the elders of Israel remembered a man named Jephthah, a mighty man of valor, and they went and asked him to lead Israel against Ammon. But Jephthah had been cast out of his home by his brothers, and he had had to flee away and dwell like a stranger in the land of Tob. So he answered the elders, "Did ye not hate me and drive me out of my father's house?" So they said, "If you conquer, you shall be chief of Israel."

Then Jephthah arose, and put on his armor, and prepared himself for the battle. So anxious was he to win the victory, that he prayed to God, and said, "If Thou wilt deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatever cometh forth the first out of my house when I return in peace, shall be given unto the Lord as a burnt offering." Then Jephthah went forth to war, and he fought against Ammon, and conquered twenty cities, and the enemy fled from him, and he returned victorious and rejoicing to his house in Mizpah.

As he came near to his house, he watched to see if his sheep or some other animal were coming out of the house, so that he might sacrifice the first living thing that met him. Soon he saw something white coming towards him in the distance: it was his daughter, his only child, who was so anxious to see her father safe and well that she could not wait for him to arrive. And Jephthah wept, and mourned over his rash, hasty vow; how he wished he had not made it! Weeping, he told his daughter of his oath to God. The girl turned white, and for a while she could not speak; then she said,

"My father, thou hast made an oath to God; the Lord hath given thee the victory; now fulfill thy vow." So the pure and innocent daughter of Jephthah had to pay the

price for his careless and wicked oath, and all his life Jephthah was alone, for she was his only child.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STORY OF THE STRONGEST MAN

AGAIN the children of Israel forgot God's Law, and sinned against him. And God allowed the Philistines to conquer them. The enemy took the grain and cattle away from the Hebrews, and made them their servants. And there was no one wise enough or strong enough, at this time, to lead Israel against the enemy. But God had not forgotten His people.

There lived in Israel a certain man named Manoah, who had no children. One day, as he was working in the field, his wife came running to him, and told him that an angel had appeared to her, and had promised that she would have a son. This son was to be devoted to the service of God, and as a sign of this devotion, his hair must never be cut.

When the son was born, he was the biggest and strongest baby that had ever been seen, and he grew to be the biggest and strongest man in Israel. A hundred people could not hold him down; his muscles were like thick ropes under his skin, and his black eyes glowed with power between the long masses

of his dark hair, which was never cut. But Samson never thought of using his strength to fight the enemy. So God caused him to become very angry with the Philistines, and this is how it happened.

Samson wanted to marry a Philistine girl, who lived in Timnah, and he begged his parents to go to her father, and ask him to let Samson marry her. His parents were very sorry that he wanted to marry a heathen, but they could not refuse him anything, so they went to Timnah. And the girl's father said, "Yes, Samson may marry her." A fine wedding-feast was prepared, Samson invited guests, both Philistines and Hebrews, and made all arrangements for the wedding. Suddenly, in the midst of the preparations, came the news that the girl had been married to someone else!

Samson was furious, and he took a strange revenge. He caught three hundred foxes, tied torches to their tails, and set them loose in the growing corn of the Philistines. So the sheaves and the standing corn and the oliveyards of the Philistines were set on fire, and the crops were all burnt up. When the Philistines found out that Samson had done this, they were afraid of him, and in order to please him they went and burnt the house of the bride, and she and her father perished. But this horrible deed only enraged Samson

the more; he slew a great many of the Philistines, and then he went away to live all alone in the cleft of a large rock in Etam.

The Philistines made up their minds to catch Samson and slay him. They gathered together, and prepared to attack the men of Judah, in whose land Samson was living. But the men of Judah did not dare to fight the Philistines; so they went to Samson's rock, and called out to him. And Samson came out, a huge, dark creature, with a skin for a garment, and thick masses of long hair reaching down to his waist. And the men of Judah said, "What is this that thou hast done to the Philistines..."

"As they did to me, so did I to them," answered Samson.

"We have come to bind thee, and to deliver thee to the Philistines," said the men.

Samson let them bind him with ropes, and they brought him down to the enemy. When they saw him, they shouted mightily, and the spirit of the Lord came upon Samson; he burst his ropes as if they were threads; he picked up for a weapon the jaw-bone of an ass; he rushed among the enemy, and slew a thousand of them, and the others fled. But Samson was nearly dying of thirst. He called on the Lord, and a stream of water burst forth from a rock, and he drank it and was revived.

Always the Philistines watched for a

chance to capture Samson. He went one day to the town of Gaza, and stayed there over night; and in the night the Philistines came and locked the great gates, so that he should not be able to escape. But Samson arose at midnight, and went through the silent street to the gates, and finding them locked, he heaved his shoulders against the posts, and plucked the gates right up out of the earth, and carried them away on his back to the top of Mount Hebron, and there the Gazites had to go to fetch them back again!

Because of his great strength, the Israelites chose Samson to be their judge.

But Samson never really tried to free his people from the rule of the Philistines; therefore he himself became at last a miserable slave to the enemy.

Samson loved a beautiful woman, named Delilah; he could not refuse her anything. But she did not love him; she only pretended to love him. So the lords of the Philistines came to her, and said,

"Find out where Samson's great strength lieth so that we may conquer him, and bind him and torture him; then each one of us will give thee eleven hundred pieces of silver."

So Delilah coaxed Samson, and flattered him, and asked him to tell her where his great strength lay. Samson did not want to tell her, but he could not refuse her pleadings,

so he told her a lie. "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that were never dried, I shall become weak," he said.

She told the lords of the Philistines, and they brought her the bowstrings, and hid themselves in her rooms, and she bound him while he slept; then she woke him, exclaiming, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" Samson jumped up, he stretched his mighty arms and legs, and the bowstrings snapped like thread. Then Delilah wept, and said,

"You have mocked me, and told me lies; now tell me truly, wherein is thy strength?"

And Samson consoled her, and said, "If they bind me with new ropes, then I shall become weak."

The lords of the Philistines brought her the new ropes, and again she bound Samson while he slept, and again she woke him with the cry, "The Philistines are upon thee!" And again Samson jumped up, and the new ropes snapped like threads.

Then Delilah turned away, and said, "Thou hast mocked me again." And he told her, "Fasten the locks of my hair to the pin of the beam, and I will lose my strength." But again she found that he had not told her the truth. Day after day she begged him, and coaxed him, and worried him to tell her where his strength lay. And at last Samson told her the truth:

"I am strong because God's spirit is within me. I have been kept sacred to God, and in sign of this, my hair was never cut; if I should have my hair cut, my strength would go from me."

This time Delilah rejoiced, for she knew he had told her the truth. And when he fell asleep, she sent for a man to cut off his hair, and she bound him with ropes. Then she woke him with the cry, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!" And he jumped up, and stretched out his arms, but his bonds held him fast; he struggled with all his might, but he could not break the ropes. And the Philistine lords came out of the place where they had been hiding, and they seized Samson, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to their city of Gaza.

All the way to the prison-house, crowds of Philistines followed Samson and his captors, rejoicing and jeering. They chained Samson to the grindstone in the cellar of the prison, and he had to turn the grindstone, there in the damp and darkness. He became thin and gaunt and weak, and in his misery he wished for death. But as his hair began to grow again some of his strength came back to him.

In thanks for the capture of their terrible enemy, the Philistine lords prepared a great feast and made sacrifices to their idol, the god Dagon. They gathered in the mighty hall,

more than three thousand men and women, and they feasted and drank and sang songs. Then someone shouted, "Call for Samson, that he may make sport for us!"

So they brought Samson up out of the prison; he came, his chains clanking, his footsteps heavy and stumbling, with a little boy holding his hand to guide him. The Philistines shouted with laughter, and mocked and jeered at him. But Samson answered them nothing; he turned to the boy who led him, and said,

"Let me feel the pillars upon which the house rests, that I may lean upon them." And the boy laid Samson's hands against the central pillars, which supported the house. And Samson called to the Lord, and said, "Oh, Lord, God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be this once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." And Samson took fast hold of the two middle pillars and leaned upon them, and said, "Let me perish with the Philistines," And he bent down with all his might, and the pillars broke, and the house fell down upon the lords and upon all the people, and all the people were slain together with Samson.

Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and buried him in the burying-place of his father.



THE CALL OF SAMUEL

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MAN WHO WAS HOLY TO GOD

FOR a long time after the death of Samson, there were neither judges nor rulers in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes, and there was great evil-doing and oppression of the poor and weak in Israel.

There lived at this time a pious woman, named Hannah, who had no child. She went to the Tabernacle of God at Shiloh, and prayed, "Oh, Lord of Hosts, if Thou wilt remember me, so that I may have a child, then I will devote him to Thee all the days of his life; he shall be a Nazarite, and his hair shall not be shorn." The high priest, Eli, who was sitting in the doorway of the temple heard her praying, and he blessed her, saying, "May God grant thee thy wish." God did grant it; she soon had a son.

When the little boy could walk, Hannah took him up with her to Shiloh, to give him to the service of God, according to her vow. She left him with Eli, and he ministered to the Lord, according to the instructions which Eli gave him. Every year his mother would come, bringing him a little

robe which she had made, and Eli blessed her. And the boy, whose name was Samuel, grew up, and everybody respected him.

Now the sons of Eli were wicked men, and the Lord would not allow them to become priests. One evening, old Eli lay down to sleep and Samuel also lay down in his place near the Ark. And the Lord called Samuel, and he answered, "Here I am." Getting up, he ran to Eli, for he thought it was Eli who wanted him. But Eli said, "I called not; lie down again." And again the Lord called Samuel, and again Samuel went to Eli, who told him to lie down again. But when the Lord called him again, Eli understood that it was God, and he told Samuel, "When thou art called again, answer thus: 'Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth.' " And the Lord spoke to Samuel, and told him that the house of Eli should be punished for their sins. In the morning, Eli asked Samuel what the Lord had said to him; it grieved Samuel to have to tell such bad news, but the old priest bowed his head and submitted to God's will.

At this time, Israel was under the rule of the Philistines, who oppressed them cruelly. Beaten in all their attempts to free themselves, the Israelites exclaimed, "Next time we go to fight, let us bring the Ark of God with us; it will save us!" But their hearts were still full of sin, and so God was not with them,

and the mere presence of the Ark could not save them. With great pomp and glitter, they brought the Ark down from Shiloh, and the soldiers, drawn up for battle, gave a shout of joy when they saw it, thinking that now their disobedience to God would not matter. But a great awakening was in store for them; not only were they completely conquered by the Philistines, but the Ark itself was captured, to show them that the Ark was only a symbol, and meant nothing without the presence of God.

Amid the tears of the Hebrews and the rejoicing shouts of the Philistines, the Holy Ark was carried off to the Philistine city of Ashdod. The priests of the idols took the Ark into their temple, for they considered that the God of the Hebrews was a powerful God, and they wanted to show Him respect, but they did not consider Him any greater than their own false idols.

But God would not permit them to think that their idols were worthy to be placed near the Ark, nor that He was only one among many gods. Every morning, when the priests of the idol Dagon came into the temple, they were horrified to find that their chief idol was lying on its face before the Ark! They would raise it up and replace it, but next morning it was always found lying on the floor.

At the same time, a terrible plague began

to rage through the city; the people of Ashdod begged that the Ark should be taken away, but wherever the Ark was brought, plague and death to the Philistines came with it. And at last the whole people cried out "Why do you bring death among us? Take the Ark back to Israel!" So they sent it back, with a guilt-offering of gold and treasures; and the Israelites rejoiced with all their hearts when they saw that the Holy Ark was returned to them, and they offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings to God.

Eli, the high priest, had died, and Samuel alone ruled the people. He was so wise and great that all the people obeyed him and held him in reverence. He renewed their faith in God, and helped them to obey His Law. He taught them that if they would give up all their wickedness, and obey God in everything, according to the Law which He had given to Moses, they would regain their freedom, and conquer all of the promised land.

But the people of Israel looked about them, and saw that all other nations had kings, and they thought that these nations were mighty because of the wisdom of their kings. So the elders of Israel went to Samuel, and said,

"Behold, thou art old, and thy sons are not like thee, but are evil; now make us a king to judge us, like all the nations."

Samuel was much displeased; he knew that it was their own wicked ways and their weakness which prevented them from conquering the land, and not the lack of a king. God alone was their king; when they served Him with all their hearts, they were the mightiest of all people, because He helped them; now they preferred to depend upon a man. And Samuel prayed to God, and the Lord answered him: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me... Howbeit, thou shalt earnestly forewarn them and tell them what manner of king shall rule over them."

So Samuel told the people the words of God, and he said, "This is what a king will do: he will take your sons to run before his chariots, and to plow his fields, and to make his weapons; and he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and cooks, and handmaids. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. . . . He will take the tenth of your flocks, and ye will be his servants. And ye shall cry out to God because of your king whom you have chosen, and in that day the Lord will not answer you."

But still the people answered, "Nay, but there shall be a king over us, that we may

be like the other nations, and that our king may judge us, and fight our battles." So it was decided that Samuel should appoint a king.



ANCIENT HEBREW KING AND WARRIORS

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIRST KING

THERE was a man of the tribe of Benjamin whose name was Kish; and he had a son called Saul, a young and handsome man, taller by head and shoulders than any other man in Israel. The asses of Kish were lost, so Kish sent Saul and a servant to look for them. They traveled far, but could not find the asses. Saul found that Samuel was in the city where they had arrived, and so he went to the prophet to pay his respects and to ask help in finding the asses.

God had told Samuel the day before that He would send him a Benjamite whom he should anoint as king. When Samuel saw Saul, he knew that this was the man who was to be king,

And he took Saul, and brought him into the guest-chamber, and made him sit in the first place. The cook brought the chief joint of meat and set it before Saul. Saul was amazed at the honor shown him by the mighty prophet, for he was not a man of importance or of high birth, being of the tribe of Benjamin, which was the lowliest of all the tribes.

Samuel spent the whole of the next day talking with Saul, and then they went out of the house together. Sending the servant on ahead, Samuel took a vial of holy oil, and poured it on Saul's head to anoint him. He kissed Saul, and told him that God had chosen him to be the prince over Israel.

Saul went quietly home to his father's farm, and did his work as usual, and did not tell anybody about God's choice of him. But from that day the spirit of God was upon him, and he prophesied, so that the people about him wondered what had happened to him.

Now Samuel called together all the people, and announced to them that he would cast lots for a king. He knew that the lot would fall upon Saul, and so it did. Everyone looked around to see their new king. But where was he? No one could find him, until God showed Samuel that Saul, in his modesty, had hidden himself among the baggage! When at last he came out before the great gathering of people, splendid in his height and strength, but with his head bent in confusion, the people were swept with wild enthusiasm, and all cried out, "Long live the King!" But some worthless, troublesome fellows looked scornfully at him, and said, "How will *he* save us?"

Saul went back to his farm, for the anoint-

ing did not make him actually king until he had done something to show that he had deserved it.

One day, as he came out of the field with his oxen, he saw a crowd of people weeping and wailing. Saul stopped, and asked,

"What ails you? Why do you weep?"

"The king of Ammon has encamped against Jabesh-Gilead," answered two men who were messengers from that city. "We cannot fight him, and we cannot get help from the other tribes. We asked him for peace, but he says he will only give us peace on condition that he may put out the right eyes of all the men of Jabesh-Gilead."

The spirit of God came upon Saul as he heard these words. Saul's face grew red with rage, and his eyes burned. Without a word he turned, seized upon a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces.

"Let messengers carry these pieces throughout the land," he said, "and cry, 'Whoever will not come out with Saul and Samuel to fight for Jabesh-Gilead shall have his oxen hewn in pieces like these!'"

The messengers, with renewed hope, went swiftly through the land. The fear of God descended upon the men of Israel when they heard the message, and three hundred thousand men of Israel and thirty thousand men of Judah came forth to fight. With Saul at

their head, the great army plunged down upon the Ammonites, and in a few hours put them all to flight.

Wild with joy and pride, the people came rushing to Samuel and to Saul and praised and honored their king. They wanted to kill the men who had jeered at Saul, but he would not let them.

Now Saul could really be called "the king." Samuel and the people renewed the kingdom, and again declared Saul to be their King; they offered peace-offerings and sacrifices to God, and all Israel rejoiced. Then Samuel, who was very old, took a solemn farewell of the people. He warned them against their sins, saying,

"Ye have done great evil, yet fear not. . . . Only serve God in truth, with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. But if ye still do wickedly, then ye shall be destroyed, both you and your king." And the people and Saul bowed their heads, and promised to serve God truly.

After Saul had reigned two years, he decided to let most of the army go home to their fields and their business. He kept only three thousand men, two thousand to stay under him, and one thousand to be under the command of his son, Jonathan.

Jonathan was a strong, tall youth, noble and generous and very brave. He did not

remain idle with his troops, but went up to the city of Geba and attacked the Philistine garrison. He fell upon them with such force and daring that he destroyed them all. The Philistines promptly got ready a huge army to punish this bold act. They collected thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and countless foot-soldiers.

Many of the Israelites were terrified; they hid themselves in caves and dens, in thickets, rocks, and pits—anywhere to escape from the enemy. The soldiers of Saul followed him in fear and trembling, for they thought they would surely be slain.

While Saul waited in the camp for Samuel to come and sacrifice before the battle, many of the soldiers lost heart altogether, and started going home. Saul, eager to feel that he alone was lord of Israel decided not to wait for Samuel any more, but to offer the sacrifice himself.

No sooner had he finished making the offering, than Samuel came in sight. He was very angry with Saul for his independent action, but even more disappointed than angry. He saw that Saul did not have the complete faith and submission which the king of Israel must have. As he had done this thing, so would he also do any other thing that he thought right, without considering if it were pleasing to God.

Samuel turned bitterly away from Saul's excuses. "Thou hast not kept the Lord's commandment," he said. . . . "Now God hath sought out another man to rule the kingdom in thy place, because thou hast not obeyed Him."

Troubled and angry, Saul continued to prepare for battle. The Philistines had not allowed the Hebrews to possess swords or other weapons; only Saul and his son Jonathan had swords. All the rest of the people took their farming-tools, their axes, pitchforks, and goads, and sharpened them.

While the two armies were still preparing, Jonathan secretly called his armor-bearer. They stole out together, and climbed the rocky passes which led to the encampment of the Philistines. Jeering, the Philistine soldiers looked down from the rocks above. "The Hebrews are coming out of their holes! Come up and we will show you something!" they laughed. Jonathan and his armor-bearer went steadily up. Once at the top, they suddenly began to lay about them with terrific strength and sureness; the Philistines broke up in a panic, and fled away down the rocks, slaying each other in their confusion. Then the Hebrews came running out of their caves, and pursued them, and slew them. So a great victory was gained that day by the two young men.

The war against the Philistines continued, off and on; there were fierce battles, and then a short period of truce, and then battles again. Whenever Saul found a strong or brave man, he made him a soldier. And Samuel came to Saul, and said,

"Thou art King of Israel; now listen to the word of God. Go forth and fight the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them and all that they possess."

Saul collected his army, and led them against the Amalekites, who were almost the worst enemies of Israel, and smote them and destroyed them all. But he and the people kept all the best oxen and lambs alive. When Samuel came to Saul, the king said, "I have fulfilled the command of God."

"What means then this bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen which I hear?" asked Samuel, sternly.

"The people brought them from Amalek, to sacrifice to thy God," answered Saul.

Samuel was filled with anger at this excuse. Saul was the king; he could have stopped the people from disobeying God by bringing the animals. And he said,

"I will tell thee what God has said to me. Has God as much delight in sacrifice as He has in obedience? To obey is better than to sacrifice. To disobey is as bad as worshipping idols. Because thou hast re-

jected God's word, He has rejected thee from being king."

Samuel turned to go, but Saul caught hold of his garment, to hold him back. The garment tore in his hand, and Samuel said, "Even so has God torn away the kingdom from thee, and has given it to one who is better than thou."

And Samuel went to his home in Ramah, and never saw Saul again to the day of his death, for he mourned for Saul.



RUTH AND NAOMI

CHAPTER SIX

THE STORY OF RUTH

IN THE days of the Judges, there was a famine in the land of Israel, and a certain man of Judah went with his wife and sons to dwell in Moab until the famine should end. The man died there, and his two sons married Moabite women. For ten years they lived in peace in Moab, then the sons also passed away. And Naomi, their mother, decided to return to the land of Israel, for the famine was over.

So she called her sons' wives, and said to them, "Go, return each of you to the house of your mother; God be kind to you, as you have been to my sons and me."

But her daughters-in-law wept, and said, "No, we will not go back to our mothers; we will return with thee to thy people."

"Nay, turn again, my daughters," said Naomi, shaking her head. "Why will ye go with me? Can I provide for you, and will you have a pleasant life with me, a lonely widow weeping for her sons? Nay, I am grieved for your sakes, for the hand of God hath gone forth against me."

So Orpah sadly kissed her mother-in-law, and went away in tears. But the other daughter-in-law, who was called Ruth, would not go. And Naomi said,

“Behold, thy sister-in-law hath returned to her people and to her God; return thou after her.”

But Ruth answered, “Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee, for where thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.”

So Naomi saw that Ruth was determined, and she did not urge her any more. Together they traveled back to the land of Judah. They were poor, and Naomi had no one but Ruth to take care of her. They did not know how to make a living. But it was the time of the barley harvest, and all the farmers were having their fields reaped. And the poor people came into the fields after the reapers, and gathered up the ears of barley that fell, or that were left uncut upon the ground, or that grew in the corners, for it was the law in Israel that this part of the harvest must be left for the poor. So Ruth decided to go out into the fields

with the gleaners, and try to collect enough barley for food for Naomi and herself.

Ruth, her heavy, dark hair bound up, walked slowly among the gleaners, bending her tall form to pick up the ears that fell. Sometimes her back hurt with stooping, and her heart ached with homesickness, as she gazed on the strangers about her, and heard the words of a foreign language.

It happened that the field in which Ruth gleaned belonged to Boaz, a very wealthy man, a kinsman of Naomi's husband. One day, he came in from Bethlehem to see how the work was progressing; he greeted the reapers, who saluted him respectfully. Then he noticed the tall, beautiful stranger, gleaning after them, and he asked,

"Who is this damsel?"

"It is the Moabite woman, who returned with Naomi," answered the reapers, for everyone knew the story of Naomi and her faithful daughter-in-law.

Boaz's face brightened with interest. He looked kindly at Ruth, and called her towards him. She came, wondering what he would say, and if he would send her away from his field, because she was a foreigner. But Boaz said,

"Hear now, my daughter. Go not to any other field to glean, but stay here, and follow my reapers. And when thou art

thirsty, drink from the water which my young men have drawn from the well."

Ruth opened her lovely eyes wide with surprise and gratitude. Bowing to the ground, she faltered,

"How have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldst notice me, a foreigner?"

And Boaz answered, "It has been fully told me, all that thou hast done to Naomi, and how thou hast left thy home and the land where thou wast born, and hast come to a people that thou knewest not. May the God of Israel, under whose wings thou hast taken refuge, reward thee in full."

Grateful tears came into Ruth's eyes, and she said, "Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, for thou hast comforted me, and hast spoken kindly unto thy hand-maid." And she went on gleaning, with a cheerful heart, and her back did not ache any more.

When meal-time came, and all the servants went to the place where the long tables were set, Ruth stayed behind, in doubt. But Boaz saw her, and called to her, and made her sit down, and eat with the reapers, and they gave her a large portion of the parched grain, so that she had more than enough. And when she went back to the gleaning, Boaz told the young men to let her glean among the sheaves, and to pull

out some of the barley-stalks from their bundles, for her to pick up.

Ruth gleaned until evening, and when she threshed what she had gleaned, she found that she had a full measure of barley. She took it up and went into the city. When Naomi saw how much she had gathered, she asked in surprise,

"Where hast thou gleaned today? Blessed be he that hath been kind to thee."

"I was in the field of Boaz," answered Ruth, and she told Naomi all that Boaz had said and done. Naomi was very thankful, and she advised Ruth to remember what Boaz had said, and never to go into any other field to glean. So Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz all through the barley-harvest, and all through the wheat-harvest which followed.

At the end of the wheat-harvest, Naomi called Ruth, and said,

"My daughter, tonight Boaz winnoweth the barley on the threshing-floor. Wash thyself and anoint thee, and put on fresh raiment, and go down to the threshing-floor."

Ruth did as she was told; she bathed herself, and put on fresh clothes, and combed out her beautiful dark hair, and put good sandals on her shapely feet. She went up out of the city to the fields, and came to the threshing-floor.

The air was sweet with the smell of the heaped-up grain. All was ready for the winnowing, and the men came in with their flails to beat the barley, and after a while Boaz came. The red light of the torches flickered on Ruth's white robes; Boaz saw her standing there, and his heart filled with love and admiration for her. He went up to her, and greeted her, saying,

"Blessed be thou of God, for thou art a worthy woman. Now there is a kinsman of your husband who is a nearer kinsman than I; I will speak to him tomorrow, and see if he desires to claim the right of a kinsman to marry thee; but if he does not claim it, then will I myself marry thee."

The next day, Boaz rose early, and went to the city, and sat down in the gate and soon the near kinsman came by.

"Come, sit down here," said Boaz, and the man sat down. And Boaz also called ten men of the elders of Israel to be witnesses. And he said,

"Naomi, who came back from Moab, desires to sell the land of her husband that is dead. Thou art a nearer kinsman than I, and thou mayest buy it if thou wilt; but if thou dost claim this right, thou must also claim thy right to marry Ruth."

The man shook his head. "I cannot marry Ruth," he said, "for I cannot provide

for her. Take thou my right, for thou art the next kinsman." And, according to the custom of the time, the other kinsman drew off his shoe and gave it to Boaz, as a sign that he yielded up his right. And the elders blessed Boaz and Ruth.

So Boaz took Ruth, and married her, and Naomi lived with them. Ruth was very happy with her kind and noble husband, and still more happy when she had a little son. The women neighbors came to see her, and they took up the baby and showed him to Naomi, and said,

"May his name be famous in Israel; he shall be to thee a restorer of life and a nourisher of thine old age, for Ruth, thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, and is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." And Naomi took up the baby and held it in her arms, and for the first time she felt almost comforted for the death of her sons.

This baby grew up, and became a man, and in time he married, and his son was called Jesse. And the son of Jesse was David, who became the mightiest of all Israel's kings. So this lovely, kind girl, Ruth, became the ancestress of the most famous family in Israel. And now you are going to read the strange and wonderful story of David himself, whose life was as full of adventure and glory as a fairy-tale!

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SHEPHERD BOY AND THE GIANT

AND GOD spoke to Samuel, as he grieved in his home at Ramah, and He said, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, whom I have rejected? Fill thy horn with oil, and go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided Me a king from among his sons."

"How can I go?" said Samuel. "If Saul hears of it, he will kill me."

"Take a heifer with thee," answered the Lord, "and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to God.' And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and thou shalt anoint unto Me him whom I shall name unto thee."

So Samuel girded himself up, and took his staff, and set out for Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him in fear and trembling and they asked, "Is it in peace that thou hast come?"

"I come in peace," answered Samuel, "to sacrifice to God. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel looked at Jesse's sons; and he thought, "Surely, this one, the eldest, Eliab,

is the Lord's anointed." But God said, "Look not at his face nor at his height, for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." One after the other, the sons of Jesse passed before Samuel; yet none of them was the one chosen by God.

And Samuel said, "Are all thy sons here?"

"There remains yet the youngest," said Jesse. "He is keeping the sheep in the meadow."

"Send and fetch him," said Samuel.

So they sent for him. Dressed in a goat-skin, and carrying a shepherd's crook in his hand, David came walking quickly toward them. He was full of life and beauty; his bright eyes seemed to be looking everywhere at once, and he sang lightly under his breath as he walked. When he saw Samuel, he stopped and saluted him.

Although David was slender and young, his limbs were strong, and his beautiful, soft eyes had a flash of light in them that showed a brave and thoughtful spirit. And the voice of God said to Samuel, "Arise, and anoint him, for this is he whom I have chosen."

And Samuel took the horn of oil, and poured it on David's golden hair, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the spirit of God came upon David from that

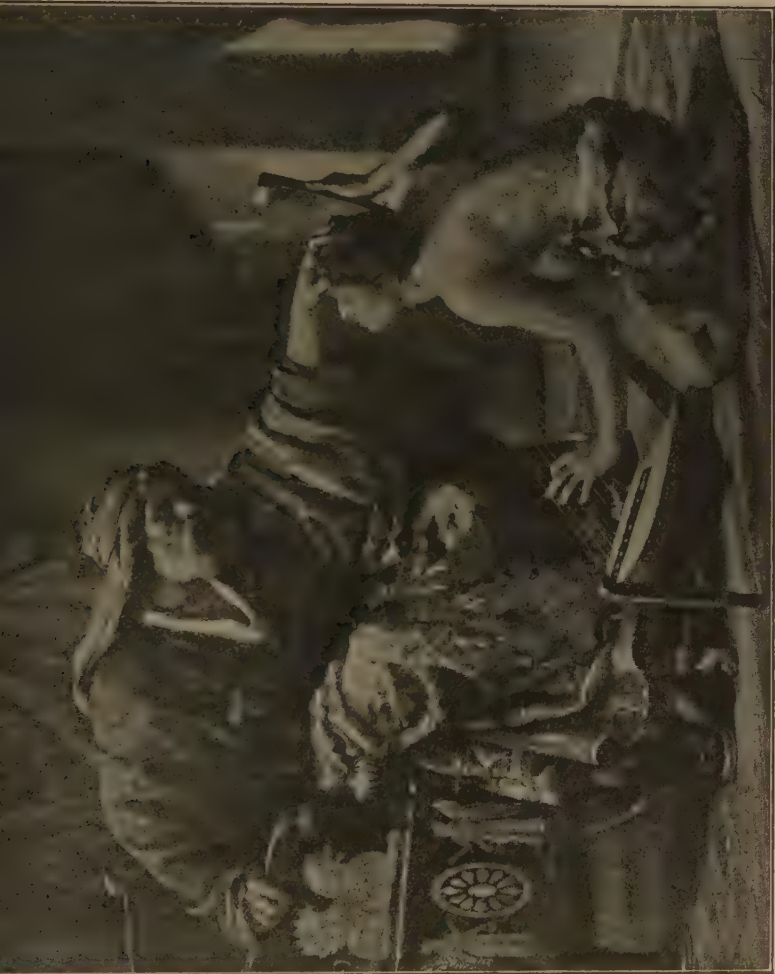
day. Then Samuel rose up and went home to Ramah.

But from Saul the spirit of God had departed. Evil moods and fits of dreadful melancholy came upon him at times, and no one could comfort him. "Behold," said Saul's servants to him, "an evil spirit troubles thee. Let our lord command his servants to seek out a man who is a skillful player upon the harp; he shall play to thee, and thou shalt be well."

"Provide me such a man," said Saul wearily. And one of his servants answered, "I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who plays well upon the harp; he is brave, and prudent, and pleasant to look upon, and God is with him."

So Saul sent messengers to bring David to him, and David played the harp before him, and sang. As Saul heard him, his heart was soothed, and he felt refreshed and well. And he loved David, and often sent for him to come from his father's house and play to him.

The war with the Philistines was still in full swing, and the two armies were even now preparing for a great battle. The Philistines were encamped on one mountain, and the Hebrews on the opposite mountain; between them lay a valley. The Philistines had in their army a giant; they were very



DAVID PLAYING BEFORE SAUL

proud of him, and every day they sent him striding out into the valley, glittering all over with brazen armor, to challenge the Israelites, and defy the armies of God.

"Choose one man from among you," he would bellow in hoarse tones, "and let him come down here and fight me. If he conquers me, then I and all the Philistines shall serve the Hebrews; but if I conquer, all the Hebrews shall serve us. I defy the armies of Israel; send me a man to fight with."

Day after day, the blasphemous defiance came; King Saul in his tent bit his lip with anger, and his face grew dark, for there was no man in Israel who could fight the giant, Goliath.

Now, Jesse's older sons had gone to the battle with Saul, but David still kept the sheep in his father's meadows. One day, Jesse called him, and said,

"Take this parched grain and these loaves of bread to thy brothers in the camp, and carry these cheeses as a present to their captain."

David took the food, left his sheep with a keeper, and went off eagerly to the camp. Saul with some of his soldiers were down in the valley, fighting a troop of Philistines. The rest of the Hebrews were preparing to go down, and David heard them shouting and saw them waving their weapons in pre-

paration. He went down with the army, found his brothers, and gave them the message and the food. As he talked with them, he saw on the other side of the mountain a huge figure, whose brazen armor blazed in the sun, stalking out of the dark masses of the Philistine army. And he heard the giant roar out,

"I defy the armies of Israel this day! send me a man to fight with me."

And as he moved down into the valley the Hebrew soldiers pressed backwards, and then turned and fled before him.

David's heart beat fast with indignation, and the blood flamed in his cheeks, to hear this heathen giant defy the armies of the living God. He wondered that no one came forward to fight him, for surely the victory was in God's hands, and did not depend on the strength of the fighter.

So David went to the tent of Saul, and said, "Thy servant, David, will go and fight the Philistine."

Saul could not help smiling, and his hand relaxed on his great spear.

"Thou art not able to fight him," he said kindly. "Thou art but a youth; he is a seasoned warrior."

But David persisted. "When a lion and a bear came to steal a kid from my flock, I killed them with my hands," he pleaded.

"And this heathen shall be even as one of these, for he has defied the living God. And God who saved me from the lion and the bear, will save me from the Philistine."

"Go, then," said Saul, "and God be with thee." And he ordered that his own helmet and armor should be put upon David. But young David could not even walk in them, they were so heavy. He put them off, went to a brook and chose five smooth stones from its bed; he took his wallet and his sling, went down to the valley, and confronted Goliath.

At first, the giant, striding slowly and dreadfully about the valley, did not even see him. When he noticed him, slim, unarmed except for a staff, and with a face as soft as a girl's, he was furious.

"Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with a stick?" he bellowed, and he cursed David by his gods. "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the heaven and to the beasts of the field!"

"Thou comest to me with sword and spear," said David, "but I come in the name of the living God, whom thou hast defied. This day will God deliver thee into my hand, and I will smite thee and cut off thy head, and the Philistine army shall also be conquered, that all the world may know there is a God in Israel, who saves not by sword and spear, but by His will."

And David ran toward the giant. He took a stone out of his wallet, fitted it in his sling, and slung it. It struck the Philistine full in the forehead. The ground quaked as the mighty brass-clad body of the giant fell clattering down. David ran to the prostrate figure, pulled Goliath's heavy sword out of its sheath and cut off the frightful head with its huge, hairy features and big black beard. When the Philistines saw this, they fled in terror; so that the Hebrews ran after them shouting, and destroyed them.

As David came back up the mountain to the camp, his face rosier than usual and his eyes bright with victory, the king's general, Abner, took him and brought him to Saul's tent. David came in, and stood before the king, whose dark brows frowned with wonder as he regarded the youth.

"Tell me truly," he asked, "whose son art thou?"

"Truly," said David, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite." There was no pride or satisfaction in his simple, sincere voice, for he felt that the victory was not his, but God's.

As he looked up from speaking, he met the eyes of a noble-looking warrior, who stood near the king. He knew by the fine armor and purple mantle of the young man, and also by the sword at his side, that this

was Jonathan, the prince. Jonathan was looking at him with such intense interest, and such warm kindness, that David's heart filled with pleasure, for like all Israel, he admired the brave prince.

Saul would not let David return home, but ordered him to stay with the army, which David was glad to do. The same day, a soldier came to him with a message from Jonathan, asking him to come to the prince's tent.

David went at once; he saluted the prince, who asked him many questions about himself and his home and his daily life. And Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and he made a covenant of friendship with him, and they swore to be closer than brothers to each other. Jonathan saw that David wore only a wretched goat-skin, and had no weapons; so he took off his own garment and put it on David, and fastened it with his own girdle. And he took his sword in its sheath and gave it to David. David grew red with delight, for only the king and his so ad swords. Then while he drew it out and tried its keen edge with his finger, Jonathan gave him also his spear and his strong bow.

David remained in the camp, and Saul sent him on many expeditions. Wherever he went, he acted with wisdom and bravery.

Saul gave him command of the army, and everyone was glad of it, for his fame had spread, and David was honored and praised even more than King Saul.

But great troubles were about to come upon David, from the very man who had been so kind to him, Saul; and you will see that, if not for the faithful love of Jonathan, David would have been slain.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DAVID AND JONATHAN

IT WAS now clear to Saul that the man chosen by God to succeed him as king of Israel was the young warrior, David. When the king and his army came back from battle, and the maidens of the cities through which they passed came dancing out from the gates to meet them, singing glad songs and playing joyfully on their timbrels, they did not sing of Saul alone, but they sang,

“Saul has slain his thousands,

And David his tens of thousands,”

Then the king grew bitterly jealous of David. Moods of fierce and gloomy rage came over him, and fits of temper like insanity. He thought, “They give him more glory and praise than they give me; what more can he have but the kingdom?” For Saul had come to think of the kingdom as his own, and not as given by the will of God. And he regarded David with fear and suspicion.

One day, a terrible melancholy came over the king, and David was sent for to play to

him and soothe him. Suddenly Saul sat up in his seat, and seizing his spear, flung it at David to kill him. David sprang out of the way, and rushed from the room.

Again Saul tried to slay David, but again he escaped. And Saul feared David more than ever, for he knew that God was with him. At last, the sight of David around the camp gave him such misery, that he made him captain of a thousand soldiers in order to send him away from camp. But David went on acting wisely and kindly, and everyone loved him.

Now the king thought of a plan. He knew his daughter Michal loved David; so he offered him her hand in marriage if he would bring the heads of a hundred Philistines, for he thought he would surely be killed in the attempt. David brought not one hundred, but two hundred heads, and so he was married to the princess. And Saul was even more afraid of David, for he himself had made this shepherd-boy a member of the royal family.

Saul thought night and day how he could get rid of David, who was winning away from him all power and glory. At last, he called Jonathan, and told him he must slay David, or else he would never become king. But Jonathan loved David, and rejoiced in his glory; kingdom or no kingdom, he would

not harm him. Instead, he pleaded with Saul, and persuaded him not to try to hurt David, and reminded him how much David had done for the kingdom. And Saul's better self came back for a moment, and he said, "As God liveth, David shall not be put to death." Jonathan was very glad and relieved, and he went and told David all that had been said, and told him he need not fear any more.

But as soon as the war began again, and David again came home in great triumph from his victories, the fierce, insane jealousy of Saul came back. Again he cast his spear at David while he was playing; David jumped aside, and the spear remained quivering in the wall. And David fled away and escaped.

He returned as soon as he thought the king's anger had cooled somewhat. But he did not go to the king; he went to Jonathan. And he said to him, sadly,

"What have I done? What is my sin, that thy father seeks to slay me?"

"Far from it," said Jonathan comfortingly. "The king does not wish to kill thee; for if he did, he would tell me. He never does anything without consulting me."

"Nay," said David, "but thy father knows well that I have found favor in thine eyes, and he thinks, let not Jonathan know of

this, lest he be grieved. But indeed there is but a step between me and death."

Jonathan gazed at David with a troubled expression. Then he said, "What dost thou desire? Whatsoever it may be, I will do it for thee."

David thought a while, and answered, "To-morrow is the feast of the new moon, and I should be at the king's table. But let me go instead and hide myself in the field for three days. If the king misses me, do say, that I asked leave of thee to go to my city, Bethlehem, for the yearly sacrifice which my family now makes. If he say, it is well, then thy servant shall have peace; but if he be angry, then I know that he means me evil. Therefore deal kindly with thy servant, for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of friendship with thee. If I have sinned, slay me thyself; why bring me to thy father?" For David, in his distress, even doubted his friend; he knew that his life was in the hands of Jonathan, and if the prince did not warn him truly, Saul would surely be able to kill him.

"If I knew that evil were intended thee, would I not tell thee?" said Jonathan. "Now God be witness, if I find that my father intends to slay thee, I will send to thee here, and tell thee. God be with thee as he was with my father." Jonathan meant that he

knew that David, and not himself, would be the next king of Israel. And he said, "Thou shalt show kindness to me while I live, and to my descendants for ever, yea, even when God has destroyed all the enemies of David from the face of the earth."

And Jonathan again swore a covenant of friendship with David, for he loved him with all his soul. And he said, "To-morrow thou wilt be missed at the feast, because thy seat will be empty. Wait three days, and then go down to the field, by the stone Ezel, and I will come there. And I will shoot three arrows, and send my attendant to pick them up. If I say to him, 'The arrows are on this side of thee,' then come out, for there is no harm meant thee. But if I say to him, 'The arrows are beyond thee,' then flee at once, for God hath sent thee away. And in regard to our covenant, I will keep it; God is witness between thee and me."

So David hid himself, and Jonathan went in to the feast of the new moon. King Saul came in, and sat down in his seat near the wall; Jonathan stood beside him, and Abner, the general, sat at the king's side. But David's seat was empty. The king noticed that David was not there and he frowned; but he thought some accident had happened, and David would surely be there the next evening. But the next evening came, and no David.

And Saul was suspicious, and said to Jonathan, "Where is David? Why does he not come to eat?"

"David asked my permission to go to Bethlehem, his city, for his family's yearly sacrifice," answered Jonathan, "and I gave him leave to go."

Then Saul's anger was terrible. "Thou rebellious son!" he shouted. "Do I not know that thou hast chosen this son of Jesse to thine own destruction? For as long as he lives upon the earth, thou shalt not inherit the kingdom. Now send and fetch him to me, that he may die."

"Wherefore should he die? What has he done?" answered Jonathan.

Saul took his spear and cast it at Jonathan, and the prince arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate nothing all that day, for he was grieved for David, whom his father had put to shame.

At the time appointed, Jonathan went into the field with his attendant. He took his bow and shot an arrow, and cried out to the boy, "The arrow is beyond thee; make speed, haste away, stay not." The boy ran fast, and picked up the arrow, and brought it back to Jonathan, and Jonathan gave him the weapons and sent him back to the city.

As soon as he was out of sight, the tall figure of David rose up out of a place toward

the south. He did not at once make his escape, although he knew his danger; he came hurrying towards Jonathan, and fell on his face before him, and bowed himself to the ground three times. Jonathan raised him, and they kissed each other, and both wept for grief.

And Jonathan said, "Go in peace, for our friendship shall last for always; we have sworn it before God." David dried his eyes, and went quickly away, Jonathan looked for a long time after him, and then walked slowly back to the city.

CHAPTER NINE

DAVID A FUGITIVE

IT IS sometimes a braver and wiser act to run away than to stay and face danger. David might have tried to defend himself by fighting against the king, but he would not fight the man whom God had anointed. He felt no hatred of Saul, but rather pitied him for the unhappy, suspicious nature he had. Since Saul feared him, and wanted to kill him, there was nothing for David to do but take flight. But he remained a faithful subject, in heart and in action, no matter what dangers and trials he went through on account of Saul.

Weary with traveling, alone, and half-dead with hunger, David at last dragged himself into the city of Nob, where the priests of Israel dwelt. He asked the priest Ahimelech to give him food and a weapon. But the priest looked at him with suspicion, noting his uncombed hair, his torn sandals, and his exhaustion.

"Why art thou all alone?" he inquired.

David knew that he would be taken pris-

oner if he told the priest that he was escaping from Saul, so he said,

"The king sent me on an important mission, and it is a secret."

Then Ahimelech gave David bread, and for a weapon he gave him the very sword of Goliath, which was kept as a trophy in Nob, and David hastened away. But Doeg, a servant of Saul, was there that day and he made up his mind to tell the king what he had seen.

David traveled on, and reached the city of Gath of the Philistines. When the king's servants saw him, they stared, frowned, and murmured to each other, "Is not this David, the leader of the Hebrews?" And they brought him before the king.

David saw he must do something to save himself. When they brought him into the king's presence, he began gabbling and laughing, and acting like a man who was insane, so that the king cried out angrily, "Do I lack madmen, that you bring this fellow to me?" So David escaped.

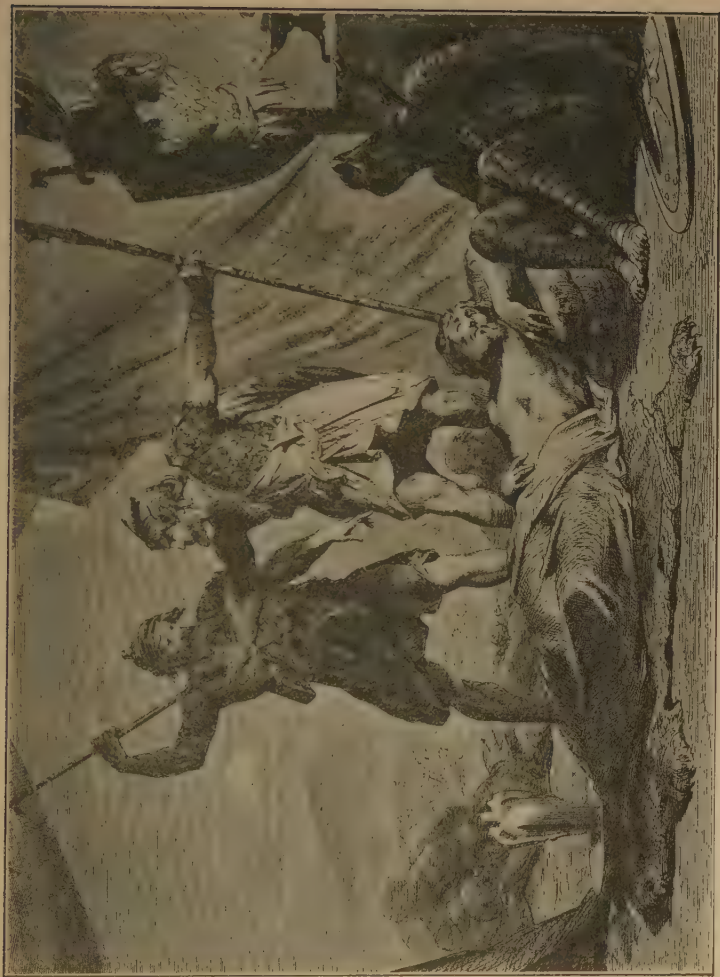
David now went to the mountains, and there he found the great Cave of Adullam. It was a dark, winding cave, with many stone caverns and passages in the natural rock, and he felt he would be safe if he hid himself there. When his brothers and relatives heard of his whereabouts, they came and

joined him, for they did not feel safe from Saul's anger and many other men who were in trouble, or in debt, or who were bitter and discontented with their lives, came to him, and he was their captain. Soon there were more than four hundred men under him; they obeyed his slightest word, and protected him at the risk of their lives, for his bravery, wisdom, and kindness made them love him.

One afternoon, as David stood with some friends near the cave entrance, he saw a man struggling at full speed up the rocks towards him. It was Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, the priest. Panting, ghastly pale, spattered with blood, he told David how Saul had slaughtered Ahimelech and the whole cityful of priests and their families, in revenge for their helping David to escape. Only Abiathar had gotten away alive.

David turned pale with grief, he blamed himself bitterly for being the cause of so many deaths. He bade Abiathar stay with him, under his protection; so Abiathar became one of his company.

Now David's spies brought him news that the city of Keilah was attacked by the Philistines, who were stealing the harvests. David prayed to God, and asked if he should not go and help the people of Keilah. And the Lord said to him, "Go, and smite the Phil-



DAVID SPARING SAUL'S LIFE

istines." So David encouraged his men, and they went down and drove out the Philistines, and saved the city. But the ungrateful inhabitants went and told Saul that David was in their city, so David and his men fled to the wilderness of Ziph, among the hills.

Saul, not finding David at Keilah, summoned his soldiers and sent them scattering all over the hillsides, looking for David, but they could not find him.

But, as David walked with some companions through the thick of a wood, he saw through the trees the glint of armor; a tall soldier was approaching. He stopped his men, and drawing his sword, went cautiously forward on tiptoe. The next moment, he flung down the sword, and rushed with open arms to meet the soldier who was running towards him. It was Jonathan.

Jonathan guessed that David feared lest others of Saul's soldiers should find him, just as Jonathan had found him; so he comforted him, and said, "Fear not, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee. Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be second unto thee, and this my father knows." And again they made a covenant of friendship, and swore to be closer than brothers until they died. Then Jonathan had to go back to Gibeah, where Saul was; and the friends never saw each other again.

But David's hiding-place was betrayed by the men of Ziph, and he had to flee with his men far up the mountain side. He saw the soldiers of Saul climbing steadily up the rocks after him. He fled to the other side of the mountain but Saul's soldiers scattered and soon surrounded the place where David's small band was hiding. Just when David felt he would certainly be caught, messengers came to King Saul, with the news that the Philistines had seized the opportunity of invading the land while the king was away. He at once gave up the chase and ordered all his soldiers back to go and fight the invaders.

No sooner had the Philistines been driven back, than Saul returned to the pursuit of David. It had been told Saul that David was hiding in the wilderness of En-gedi. Determined to settle this business at last, Saul took 3,000 picked men of his troops, went to En-gedi, and sent them scouring up and down the mountain sides, searching every cave, every thicket, every dried-up river-bed, every ravine and ledge where a man could possibly hide, even among rocks so wild and dangerous that only the mountain-goats could safely climb them.

All this while David and his men lay hidden in the dark, gloomy windings of a great cave at En-gedi. One afternoon, they heard at the mouth of the cave the clinking

of armor, the tramping of feet, and the panting of people climbing. Soon David heard the voice of Saul himself, saying, "I will enter this cave and rest; go down and wait for me." Then the heavy, tired step of the king echoed through the cave; David saw his towering figure blot out the light at the entrance for a moment; then the king stretched out on the ground, wrapped himself in his cloak, and fell fast asleep, while along the shadowy sides of the cave David's men lay crouching, silent as the dead.

David, his eyes gleaming, hardly drawing his breath, stole from his hiding-place towards the great form asleep in the shadows. He kneeled down quietly beside him, drew his sword, cut off a corner of the king's cloak, and stole back again. David's men could scarcely hide their surprise; they urged him to let them go and attack Saul, but David said, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord the king, seeing he is the Lord's anointed." So the men of David were silent.

The King's restless sleep soon ended; he woke, and walked out of the cave. Then David sprang up, and strode out after him, and called out, "My lord the king!"

Saul started, and turned around; he saw David, kneeling on the ground, bowing his face to the earth. And David said,

"Why dost thou believe what men tell thee, that I seek to hurt thee? See, my father, see this piece of thy cloak in my hand; the Lord gave thee into my power this day in the cave, but I killed thee not; therefore, know thou, and see, that there is no evil in my heart towards thee, and I have not sinned against thee, although thou seekest after my soul to take it."

"Is this thy voice, my son, David?" faltered Saul. His face was dark with shame; he bowed his head in his hand, and wept.

"Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rendered unto me good, while I have rendered unto thee evil. Now behold, I know that thou shalt surely be king; swear now by the Lord, that thou wilt not destroy my family when I am gone."

"I swear it, by the Lord," answered David. He had already sworn the same oath to Jonathan. Then the king turned, and walked slowly away.

But Saul was sick in heart and in mind; he *could* not conquer his fear of David. When the men of Ziph again came to him, and told him where David was hiding, he again collected his men, and set out to find David. He pitched his tents on a hill, before the desert.

The spies of David brought him the news, and told him where Saul and his army lay.

In the night, David arose, and went with some companions to the place, and saw the wagons, and the barricade, and the tents. With his kinsman Abishai he went warily down among the enemy. What was his amazement to find that the guards of Saul had fallen asleep at their posts so that he and Abishai came unchallenged to the very side of the king!

"I pray thee," whispered Abishai, balancing his spear in his hand, "let me smite him to the earth."

"Destroy him not," answered David. "The Lord shall smite him; who am I that I should lay my hand upon him?" Then he pulled up Saul's spear which was stuck in the ground at his head, and took the pitcher of water which was placed near him, and the two went silently away.

Then David went and stood upon a hill, far off, and cried out to Abner, the general of Saul, and shouted,

"Art thou not a valiant man? Who is like unto thee in Israel? Yet thou art deserving of death, for thou hast not kept watch over thy king. Look now for the king's spear, and for the pitcher of water that was at his head."

Then Abner knew, and Saul, waking up, also knew, that the king's life had been again in David's hands, and that he had not

slain him. And Saul called out, as before, "Is this thy voice, my, son David?"

"It is I, my lord the king," answered David. "Wherefore dost thou pursue after thy servant? What evil have I done? If the Lord has stirred thee up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if men have stirred thee, may they be cursed, for they cause me to be driven away from God, to the land of the heathens. Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth before God."

And again Saul was ashamed. "I have sinned and done great wrong," he said. "Return, my son David; I will do thee no more harm. Blessed be thou, thou shalt do mighty deeds, and thou shalt prevail."

But David did not return; he knew well that the words of Saul were only words, and that he would not cease trying to kill him, nor would the people of Israel cease betraying him to the king. He went back to his soldiers, and his heart was heavy.

"I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," he thought. "There is nothing better for me to do than to escape to the land of the Philistines; then Saul will give up looking for me, and I shall not be slain."

So he gathered together his soldiers, who now amounted to six hundred, and they went to Gath of the Philistines. Because David was now a chieftain, with a troop of soldiers,

the king, Achish, took him into his service, and gave him the city of Ziklag for his soldiers and their families to live in. And when King Saul heard that he had fled to Gath, he gave up looking for him.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEATH OF SAUL

WHEN Samuel, the great prophet, died, all Israel wept and lamented for him, and made a long procession of mourners after him, and buried him in Ramah. King Saul felt his death very keenly. Although Samuel had turned from Saul, still he had been a link between the king and God. To whom could Saul now look for wise and fearless advice?

The sickness of Saul's spirit increased from day to day; he went about with an aching, melancholy heart; he slept restlessly, and scarcely ate at all.

When the Philistines again gathered their whole hosts together for a final, decisive war and their mighty army encamped in Gilboa, King Saul was filled with black and hopeless fear. He went anxiously to the prophets for advice but they had received no word from God. He prayed, but received no answer.

Too exhausted in mind and too weak in spirit to depend upon himself, the King decided that if heaven would not answer him, he would inquire of demons. Although he

had, by his own decree, ordered all women who claimed to be witches to be slain or banished, he now said to his servants,

"Find me a woman that is a witch, that I may inquire of her." For he intended to force the soul of Samuel to rise from the dead to give him the advice of which he was sorely in need at that time.

There was a witch who lived in Endor, and here Saul's servants, traveling at night across part of the hills where the Philistines were encamped, brought the King, disguised as an ordinary soldier. And Saul said to the woman,

"Bring me up a spirit which I shall name to thee."

But the woman answered suspiciously, "Thou knowest what Saul hath done against the witches; why then dost thou lay this snare for me?"

"Nay," said Saul, "by the Lord, no punishment shall come to thee for this."

"Whom shall I bring up for thee?" asked the witch.

"Bring me up Samuel," said Saul, and his voice shook.

There was silence as the woman, kneeling in the darkness near the red flames under her boiling cauldron, began to work her spells. Then she gave a loud shriek, and fell on her face.

"Why didst thou deceive me? Thou art Saul!"

"Be not afraid," answered the king, dully. "What dost thou see?"

Trembling and huddled up in her ragged clothes, the woman answered,

"I see an old man coming up from the earth, wearing a robe." For God permitted the spirit of Samuel to arise, to give Saul the final judgment of God upon his sins. When the king understood that it was Samuel, he bowed himself to the ground before the spirit.

"Why hast thou troubled me, to bring me up?" said Samuel, in deep, mournful tones.

"I am sore distressed," faltered the unhappy king. "The Philistines make war upon me; God is departed from me, and does not answer me. Therefore I have called thee, to know what to do."

"The Lord is against thee; wherefore then dost thou ask of *me*?" replied the spirit. "The Lord hath given the kingdom to David, because thou didst not obey His voice. The Lord will also deliver Israel into the hands of the Philistines, and tomorrow thou and thy sons shall be with me." And the spirit melted away into the gloom.

Saul fell full length to the ground, exhausted with terror and weak for lack of

food, for he had not eaten all that day and night. The woman stole nearer to him, and saw him, choking with anguish, with his face on the ground, and her heart was touched with pity; she prayed him to eat a little food, but he would neither rise nor eat. Then his servants also begged him, and at last he got up drearily, and went and sat on the bed. The witch quickly prepared food, and gave it to Saul and the men, and they ate, and went away, back to their camp.

As soon as morning dawned, Saul and his sons and servants, and all the soldiers in all the tents of Israel, arose, and put on their armor silently in the gray, cold light, and went out to the battle from which Saul knew he and his sons would never return.

The grim, hard fight began, hour after hour, Israelites and Philistines hacked and slew and struggled. But the Philistines pressed steadily on, the Israelites faltered, tried to hold their ground, and finally turned and fled.

With wild shouts of triumph, the Philistines dashed after them, shooting clouds of arrows and casting their spears. A groan of horror from Israel mingled with a deep cry of joy from the enemy; Jonathan, the mighty warrior and beloved prince of Israel, was slain.

Saul himself was hardly better off; a band

of archers was gaining steadily upon him and his other sons, and the few faithful men of his bodyguard who were still with him. The Philistine arrows were tumbling all about him. And he called his armor-bearer, and said,

“Draw thy sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these heathens come and thrust me through and make mock of me.”

But the young man hid his face; he could not slay the king. So Saul drew his own sword, and fell upon it, and died. When the armor-bearer saw that his king was dead, he, too, drew his sword, and slew himself. The Philistine soldiers at last came up, jeering and shouting and slew the men who tried to defend the king's body; they unfastened the armor from the bodies of Saul and his slain sons, and sent it to the temples of their idols; and the bodies themselves they nailed to the walls of the city of Bethshan. And the Israclites living in the cities on the other side of the Jordan fled from their homes, and the Philistines came and lived in the cities.

But the men of Jabesh-Gilead remembered through all these years, how Saul had saved them from the cruelty of the Ammonites, who had wished to put out their eyes. So they traveled all night secretly, until they came to Bethshan, and there they took down the bodies of King Saul, and of Jonathan his son, and carried them back to Jabesh, and

gave them burial with due honor, and there they mourned and fasted for them seven days.

Where had David been during this terrible battle? He was in great difficulty; should he break his oath to serve the king of Gath, or should he fight against his own people? As the Philistine hosts were gathering, David and his men followed after the troops of Gath. But the Philistine princes were angry with Achish, king of Gath, when they saw the ruddy chieftain of the Jews among their Philistine armies. "Do you think this man will fight against his own king?" they said to Achish. "Surely, he will betray us." So the king of Gath regretfully ordered David to go back to his city of Ziklag.

David was very glad to have his difficulty settled in this way. But what was his horror when, arriving at Ziklag, he found that the city was in flames, and the women and children, the families of his soldiers, were taken captive and carried away by the Amalekites! He collected his troops, dashed after the Amalekites, caught up with them, slew them, and brought back the captives, together with much plunder belonging to the enemy.

Now he was completely free from his oath of service to the Philistines, for they themselves had declared enmity against him. But meanwhile, the great battle at Gilboa was being fought, and was practically over.

On the third day, David perceived a man, in torn garments, with ashes on his head, come running and panting towards him. When he reached David, he fell down and bowed his face to the earth before him.

"Where dost thou come from?" asked David.

"Out of the camp of Israel have I escaped."

"How went the battle? I pray thee, tell me!"

"The people are fled; many are slain, and Saul and Jonathan, his son, are dead also."

David's hand clenched on his spear; a cloud of pain came over his eyes, and he said, hesitatingly,

"How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan, his son, are dead?"

"Here is the crown which was upon Saul's head, and the bracelet which was on his arm." Then, hoping for reward, the man said, "I happened by chance to find the king; he asked me to slay him, and I slew him."

David turned away, and wept, leaning against the wall; he tore his garments and mourned for his beloved friend, and for his king; and for the people of the Lord, who were slain, and his soldiers mourned and wept with him. He forgot all Saul's attempts to slay him, and even the king's guilt against God; in David's good and lovely soul there

remained only the memory of the man whom God had anointed, and who had been kind and affectionate to David when he came to play his harp before him.

Then David turned to the man, and said, "Who art thou?"

"I am an Amalekite," he answered.

David's wet eyes blazed as he said, "How is it thou wast not afraid to lay thy hand upon the Lord's anointed?" Calling one of his soldiers, he ordered him to slay the man.

David fasted for a long while, and sang a beautiful pathetic song of mourning for the dead; this is part of it:

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon the high places!

How are the mighty fallen!

Ye mountains of Gilboa,

Let there be no dew nor rain upon you,
nor fields of offerings,

For there the shield of the mighty was
vilely cast away. . . .

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant
in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided.
. . . .

O, Jonathan, slain upon the high places!

I am distressed for thee, my brother,
Jonathan. . . .

How are the mighty fallen,

And the weapons of war perished!"

Then David prayed, and asked God if he should go to the land of Judah, and God told him to go to Hebron. So he went there, with all his men and their families, and they lived in the cities of Hebron. Then the men of Judah came to him, and anointed David as king over the house of Judah.



MAP 2

THE KINGDOM OF DAVID

WHEN King Sau' and his older sons were killed in battle, his young son Ish-Bosheth became king of the land. But the tribes of Judah and Benjamin chose David to rule over them.

Do you see the part marked "Philistines?" You know who *they* were? They were Israel's most troublesome enemies. Goliath was a Philistine. The places named "Moab," "Edom," and "Ammon" show where these tribes lived. They were also troublesome to Israel, but not as bad as the Philistines. Ruth, the ancestress of King David, was a Moabitess.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DAVID BECOMES KING OF ALL ISRAEL.

DAVID was now king of Judah, but the prophecy was only half fulfilled. God had promised to give to David the whole kingdom of Saul, but another king was reigning over the larger part of the land. For Abner, Saul's general, had taken the only remaining son of the dead king, and had declared him king of Israel. By the help of Abner and the army of soldiers which he commanded, this son, whose name was Ish-Bosheth, remained on the throne.

It was a very bad thing for the land to be so divided. The two parts of the kingdom wasted their strength and their wealth fighting each other, instead of fighting the Philistines, who were taking advantage of their weakness to invade and plunder the borders of the land.

Now, Abner, Ish-Bosheth's general, considered himself more important than his king, and he practically ruled the land. Ish-Bosheth, who was a quiet, timid sort of man, was afraid to give him any commands. But

one day, the king rebuked Abner for a serious fault. Abner turned on him in a rage, and exclaimed,

"Am I a dog that you talk to me like this? I have saved you, and made you ruler, but now I will give you up into the power of David, and he shall rule over all the land."

Abner seized this excuse, for he knew that God's decree that David would become king of the whole land must sooner or later be fulfilled; and he desired to be on good terms with David.

So the general went forth, and called together the elders of Israel, and said to them,

"In times past ye sought for David to be king over you; now, then, make him your king, for God hath said that He will deliver us from our enemies through the hand of His servant David." And the elders and wise men agreed with Abner, and bade him go to David, to tell him their decision.

David received Abner graciously, and made a feast for him and his attendants, for, he was happy to think that this civil war would cease without more bloodshed. So Abner promised to gather all Israel to the cause of King David, and the king thanked him and sent him away in peace.

David also had a powerful general, of great military skill. His name was Joab.

Joab came in from a raid on the Philistines, bringing rich plunder. When he heard that Abner had been with the king, and had gone away in peace, he was very angry, for Abner had killed Joab's brother in battle, and Joab had determined to take revenge.

"Why didst thou let Abner go away?" he exclaimed angrily to the king. "Dost thou not know that he is a spy?" Then, without the king's knowledge, he sent messengers to bring Abner back. Abner returned, not suspecting any evil intentions on the part of the servant of David. But when the two mighty generals met, Joab took Abner by the arm, led him within the gate, as if to talk with him quietly, and drove a dagger into his heart, so that he fell down and died.

How angry King David was when he heard of this cowardly and treacherous deed! At first people could hardly believe that Joab would do such a thing without the king's consent. But David spoke to them, and declared that he had known nothing about it and that none but Joab was responsible for the murder. And the king mourned, and buried Abner with great honor at Hebron, and he made Joab and all the people tear their garments and mourn for Abner. And David wept, and fasted, and showed his grief to be so sincere that the people all saw that David was not guilty of this treacherous act.

But no matter how much David tried to show his horror of bloodshed, there remained men among his soldiers who could not understand that he was sincere. And two of the soldiers plotted together, and said,

"Let us go and slay this Ish-Bosheth, who is the king's rival, and David our lord will reward us."

So they came to Ish-Bosheth's house at noon-time, while he was lying asleep on his bed; they killed him, and cut off his head, and stole away silently, traveling all night, and brought the head to David.

They pushed their way boldly into the king's presence.

"Behold," they exclaimed, "here is the head of Ish-Bosheth, the son of Saul, thine enemy."

But the king gazed with relentless anger upon the two soldiers, until they trembled. And he said,

"As God liveth, when a man came to me and told me that he had slain King Saul, thinking that I would be glad of it, I took him and slew him. How much more should I slay those who have slaughtered an innocent man?" And David commanded his soldiers, and they took the murderers and slew them. But the head of Ish-Bosheth was buried with honor and reverence in the grave of Abner at Hebron.

There was now nothing in the way of the elders of Israel declaring David to be their king. They went in a body to David, and said,

“Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, thou didst lead out and bring in Israel; and the Lord said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people of Israel, and shalt be prince over them.” So David became king of Israel as he was of Judah and the land was united again.

David’s victories now were very great; he conquered the city of the Jebusites, which was Jerusalem, and he dwelled in it, and it was called “the city of David.” And the Philistines and the Moabites and the Syrians and the Ammonites were all driven back by him, and there was peace in the land for a long while.

A beautiful palace of cedar-wood was built for David in the city of Jerusalem, and he dwelled there with his wives and the children that were born to him. David composed more of his wonderful psalms in praise of God, and the people sang them. One thing only troubled the king; he desired that the Ark of God should be brought from Baale-judah, and placed in Jerusalem, and that a beautiful and holy building should be erected, where all the children of Israel could come and worship the one God.

So he gathered together a picked host of thirty thousand men, the finest of Israel, and went down with them to Baale-judah to bring up the Ark with all honor to Jerusalem. As they brought the Ark, they played before it with all kinds of instruments, with harps, and psalteries, and timbrels, and castanets and cymbals, and they sang psalms and rejoiced. The priests made sacrifices before the Ark, and David blessed the people, and ordered that bread and meat and wine should be distributed to everybody.

Now David sent for the son of Jonathan, who had been hiding from him, in fear lest David should be like other kings, and slay all the family of the former ruler. The youth came trembling, but David received him kindly, and blessed him, for his father Jonathan's sake, and told him he should dine at the king's table, like one of David's own sons, and should be given lands and possessions.

David now desired to build a glorious temple for God, and he said to the prophet Nathan, "See, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains." But God spoke to Nathan, saying, "Tell my servant, David, that I will establish his family forever upon the throne of Israel, and not he, but his son shall build Me a Temple." For David's kingdom had been

established in blood and war, but his son was to rule in peace. So David gave up his plan, and blessed God, and thanked Him for His mercy and goodness to him and to the children of Israel.



DAVID IS TOLD OF ABSALOM'S DEATH

CHAPTER TWELVE

DAVID'S SIN AND HIS PUNISHMENT

DAVID'S enemies were now driven away; his victories have increased the size of his kingdom and its wealth; he was all-powerful in the land. He ruled with justice and mercy; the people were pleased with everything David did. His heart was at peace.

But the saddest part of David's life was now to come; his own goodness and cleanness of conscience which was his greatest treasure, was lost to him through a great sin.

It happened one evening that David arose from his bed, and went to walk in the garden on the roof of the palace. The roof was high, and he could see far out over the city of Jerusalem. As he gazed about, he saw a beautiful woman walking on the roof of her house, and he decided to marry her.

But, alas! his messengers brought back the news that the woman, whose name was Bathsheba, was already married, and her husband was Uriah, one of the bravest captains and most faithful servants of the king.

David went inside his palace, in great

grief; he could not forget the beauty and sweetness of Bathsheba. How could he win her? There was no righteous way. So the great king, who had been so generous and good until now, decided upon a mean, unworthy crime.

He called a messenger, and sent him to Joab, who was engaged in fighting the Philistines, with a secret letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the hottest part of the battle, and leave him alone among the enemy, so that he may be smitten, and die." And Joab obeyed the king's orders; the faithful Uriah was slain in the fight. Then David sent for Bathsheba, and married her.

But this thing which David had done displeased the Lord, and He sent the prophet, Nathan, to David.

Nathan came, and stood before the mighty king, and spoke to him, as if desiring him to judge a case.

"There were two men," he said, "in one city; the one was rich, the other was poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought, and had fed, and nourished; it grew up with him, and with his children, and he shared his own meal with it, and it drank out of his own cup. And there came a traveller to the rich man; he would not take a lamb from his own

flocks to kill for his guest's dinner, but he took the poor man's one ewe lamb, and killed it, and served it to the guest."

David flushed with indignation. "As the Lord liveth, this man deserves to die!" he exclaimed. "How cruel was this deed! and how pitiless was this rich man!"

"Thou art the man!" replied the prophet, sternly, pointing with his finger at the startled king. "Thus saith the Lord God: I anointed thee king of Israel, and delivered thee from Saul; I gave thee thy master's house, and his kingdom, and if this had not been enough, I would have given thee more. Wherefore hast thou despised the word of the Lord, and done evil in His sight? Thou hast slain Uriah with the sword, and hast taken his wife. Behold, I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house and there shall be strife and fighting in thy house forever."

David rose up, trembling, his eyes dull with horror, his face burning with shame, as he realized the full cruelty and ugliness of his crime. He could hardly believe that he had really done so horrible a thing. He covered his eyes with his hands, as if to hide the vision of his sin, and confessed, in a voice that quivered with remorse,

"I have sinned before the Lord."

The prophet's stern eyes softened as he saw the piteous grief of the king, and he said,

"The Lord hath forgiven thee. Thou shalt be punished, but thy sin shall be pardoned."

So David humbly prepared himself to receive the punishment, whenever it should come.

Up to this time, David's family had been a happy and friendly group; his children were strong and handsome, and loved each other. But now, the evil which God had said He would raise up out of David's own house began to develop. His first-born son committed a crime which so enraged another son, named Absalom, that Absalom slew his brother. Afraid of punishment, he fled. Joab saw that David longed for his son's return, yet would not send for him, because he had killed the other son; and he persuaded the king to forgive Absalom and to let him come home.

Now Absalom was David's dearest son; he was of the most perfect beauty; his hair was wonderfully thick and curly, and it was his chief pride. In all Israel he was famous for his beauty and for his gracious, charming manners. But he was vain and rebellious in heart, and he made up his mind to win the kingdom away from his father, who loved him so dearly.

First, he planned to make the people love him, so that they would fight against his father for him. He would rise early in the morning, and stand in the gateway of the city, and when anybody came in to bring a

case before David for judgment, Absalom would stop him, and speak to him kindly, and ask him what the case was about, and then he would tell him, "See, thy matters are good and right, but there is no one deputed by the king to hear thee. Oh, if I were made a judge in the land, then every man could come to me, and I would do him justice." So the man would be pleased. Then, too, whenever a man came to him, to bow down before him because he was the king's son, Absalom would raise him up, and be very gracious to him, and embrace him as if he were his friend, and the man would be flattered and proud, and would think what a splendid prince Absalom was! Thus he won the love of many foolish, vain men.

At last, Absalom felt that the time was ripe to win the throne for himself. He went to Hebron, and sent his spies throughout the land, saying, "When ye hear trumpets blown, ye shall say, Absalom is king." Every hour more and more men came to Absalom, and joined his army.

When the terrible news of his son's rebellion was brought to David, he spent no time in grieving, but at once gathered as many of his servants and soldiers as he could, and fled from Jerusalem. He saw that the punishment for his crime was coming upon him, and he did not wish the city to be attacked

and its people slaughtered through his fault. Weeping, David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and all the people with him wept, as they traveled on.

Meanwhile Absalom came in triumph to Jerusalem, and declared himself to be the king of Israel. He took possession of his father's palace, and sat on his throne. Exulting in their success, one of David's counsellors, who had deserted him and gone to Absalom, advised Absalom, saying,

"Let us gather twelve thousand picked soldiers, and pursue David, and slay him."

Now there was another of David's counsellors in the camp of Absalom, but he was a true friend to David; he had come on purpose to give Absalom bad advice, and to mislead him. So he told him,

"No, your father and his servants are mighty men of war; do not pursue them now, but wait until you have ten times as many soldiers; then you can pursue him and slay him."

The faithful counsellor said this, so that the people of Israel might have time to come to their senses, and realize what a foolish and worthless exchange they were making, in fighting their great wise king whom God had chosen, in order to put a vain young prince on the throne. He knew that as the days passed, more and more of Absalom's soldiers

would be stricken with repentance, and would go back to their lawful king.

The foolish Absalom took the advice of David's friend, and matters turned out as the faithful counsellor had thought they would. David came with his army to the city of Mahanaim, and the people ran out to meet him, and brought food and refreshment for him and his men.

Then David arranged his army for battle. He wanted to go and fight, himself; but the people would not let him, for they said, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us." So he stayed in the city gates, while the troops with their glittering spears and shields poured out of the city by hundreds and thousands.

As Joab, the mighty general, passed by, David stopped him, and said to him, "Deal gently, for my sake, with the young man, Absalom," for his heart yearned over his son in spite of his wickedness. Joab saluted in silence, and went forth to the battle.

Absalom fled for his life, mounted on a mule. But as the mule dashed on under broad trees, Absalom suddenly felt a terrible pull at his long, thick, curling hair; the next moment he was swinging in the air, for his hair had become entangled in the low branch of a tree. Struggle as he might, he could not free himself. In another minute the general Joab had come upon him,

thrusting his darts through Absalom's heart, and he slew him.

Joab went away in triumph, and caused trumpets to be blown all over the battlefield, declaring that the battle was won. And he sent a messenger to David, to tell him the good news, that his throne was safe again.

All day David had sat between the gates of the city, in his armor, his head on his hand, thinking and grieving, and worrying about his son, and repenting for the crime that had brought this evil upon himself and his beloved child. As evening came on, he heard the footsteps of a messenger, coming up the road to the city. He raised his head, and looked out eagerly.

The messenger came, panting, and fell on his face to the ground before the king. "All is well," he cried. "Blessed be the Lord thy God, who hath delivered up thine enemies."

Breathless, quaking with anxiety, David exclaimed, "Is it well with the young man, Absalom?"

"May all the king's enemies be as that young man," answered the messenger, solemnly.

A cry broke from David's lips; weeping he turned away, and went stumbling up the steps into the chamber above the gate, and as he went he sobbed, "Oh, my son,

Absalom! my son, my son, Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The messenger went back, and said to Joab, "Behold, the king is weeping for Absalom." The soldiers of David had come to the city rejoicing, proud of their loyalty and the victory which they had won. But when the news went about the city that the king was not glad, but was mourning for his son, they felt surprised and mortified; they stopped singing and celebrating, and drooped their spears, and stole silently into their houses, as if they had been defeated.

Then Joab came in his armor, with his bloody spear, to the chamber where David lay moaning on his couch, and he spoke in a bold voice that startled the king, and said,

"Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, who have saved thy life, for they see, that thou wouldst prefer that Absalom had lived, and they had all been slain. Now, therefore, go forth, and speak to them, and comfort them, or they will not remain with thee."

So David arose, and smothered his grief, and went forth and spoke to his soldiers, and praised them, and cheered them up, and they were happy again. Then David set out with his servants and soldiers and came back to Jerusalem and reigned there as before.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

YEARS passed on, and King David began to grow old. His ruddy hair and beard turned gradually white; he became less and less active, and finally did not leave his bed at all. He felt that he would soon die.

Which of his many sons should rule after him? Which was the wisest, the most God-fearing, the most modest, the best statesman? He thought long, and his choice fell upon Solomon. But Adonijah, the brother of Absalom, was bitterly jealous when he heard the king's decree.

"Why should young Solomon be chosen rather than I?" he thought indignantly. He at once collected his soldiers and servants, and went down with many chariots and in great state to En-rogel. There he gave a feast, and declared that he himself was the next king and not Solomon. And the people about him, who were taken by surprise, shouted, "God save King Adonijah."

But David promptly put an end to the revolt. He ordered that Solomon should be

magnificently dressed, placed on the king's own white mule, and brought down to Gihon. At Gihon the priest and the prophet Nathan met him; they anointed him, and declared him next King of Israel. All the people of the city rejoiced, and shouted, "God save King Solomon!" and the trumpets blew, and there was great excitement and gladness. And Adonijah heard what had been done; he was afraid, and fled for his life.

David now sent for Solomon, and blessed him, and gave him advice; and he prayed, and thanked God for all His great goodness to him. Then he closed his eyes, and died. He was buried in Jerusalem, and the people wept and mourned for many days.

The reign of King Solomon began as a reign of glory and peace. The enemies of Israel had been so severely beaten by David that they did not dare to rise against his son; instead, they sent tribute and rich gifts of gold and ivory and precious cloths, in the hope that he would be friendly to them.

Solomon was a righteous man; he loved God, and obeyed His law. One night, as he lay asleep on his silken couch, he dreamed a marvellous dream. The Angel of God appeared to him, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

Solomon thought and thought, and then he answered, "Oh Lord, my God, Thou hast

made me king, in the place of David thy servant. But I am as a little child, and know nothing. Therefore grant me an understanding heart, that I may judge thy people rightly, and distinguish between good and evil."

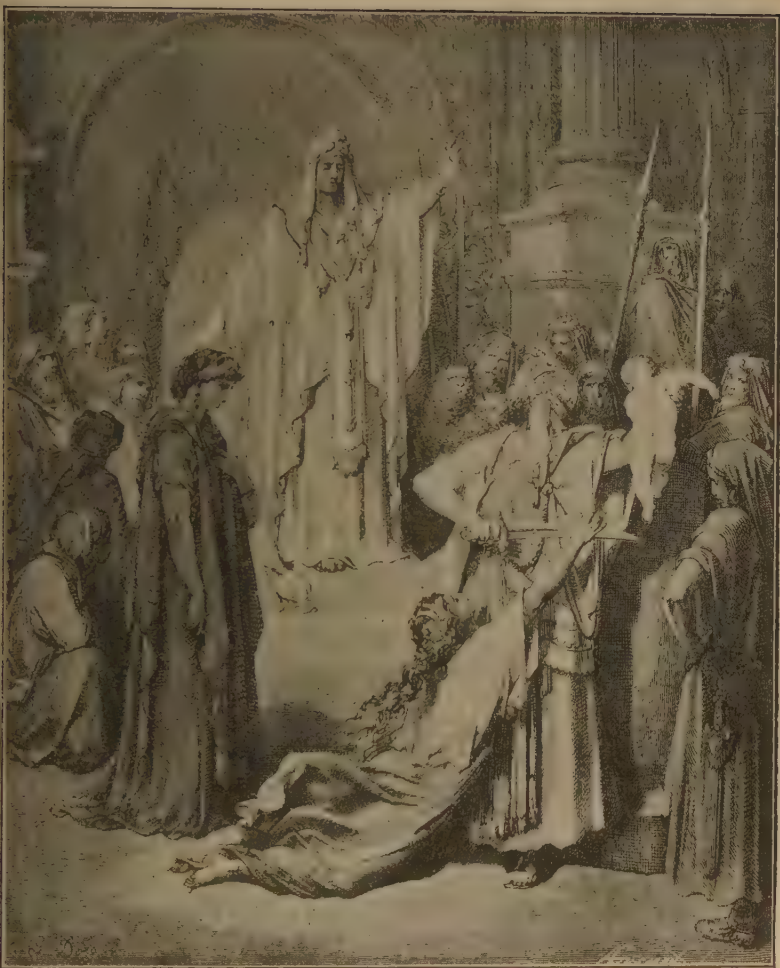
The Angel's face shone with a wonderful light, and he answered,

"Because thou hast asked this thing, instead of riches or power, I grant thee an understanding heart, so that there shall be none as wise as thou. And that which thou hast not asked for, I shall also grant thee. Only obey My Laws and commandments."

The angel vanished, and Solomon awoke. He went at once to the Holy Ark which was in Jerusalem, and praised God, and offered up sacrifices and made a great feast for all his servants. Soon after, while holding court, two women of the people came before him. They held a baby between them, and each struggled to seize the child, one woman weeping and sobbing, the other with bright angry eyes and defiant expression. And the first one said through her tears,

"My lord the king, we two women had each a baby, and we slept in the same house. In the night this woman's baby died; and she took my child while I slept, and put the dead baby beside me."

"Nay," shouted the other, "the woman lies; it was her child that died!"



THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON

The king gazed down calmly at the two mothers. Then he called a guard and said,

"Since they both claim the child, draw thy sword, and cut it in half, and give one half to each woman."

The guard seized the baby, and raised his sword to cut it in half. A wild shriek burst from the first woman; she threw herself between the sword and the baby, and cried,

"Oh, my lord the king, give the child to her! Let her have it, only do not kill it!"

"Nay, nay," said the other woman, spitefully, "let it be neither mine nor hers, but divide it."

"Give the child to the first woman," said the king. "She is its mother."

Then the courtiers and servants who stood around the king burst into exclamations of wonder and praise for Solomon's wisdom, as the real mother clasped her baby to her breast, and the other woman stole shame-faced away.

Thus Solomon's glory and fame increased day by day. His wealth also increased; he had thousands of chariots and horsemen; he ruled over all the land, to the very border of Egypt, and many great, rich cities sprang up in Israel. There was peace on every side; industries flourished, trade went busily on, there was plenty of food and plenty of money everywhere.

One thing only the people lacked, and that was a holy place to worship God. They were still making sacrifices at almost any place, meeting in small groups, at different times. Solomon remembered his father David's desire to build one great Temple, where all the nation could come and worship together. With the great wisdom and the enormous wealth which God had given him, surely, Solomon thought, he would be able to build a worthy House of God.

So he set to work, planning how the Temple should be built. Brass and iron, gold and silver, he had in plenty, but he had not the huge blocks of stone and the tall, solid trees which would also be necessary. He sent to Hiram, king of Tyre, and desired him to send many thousands of his most skillful workmen, to hew the cedars of Lebanon and to quarry great stones. Hiram, who had greatly admired David, willingly sent them, and the tremendous work was started. Thirty thousand Israelites and a hundred and fifty thousand Gentiles began the labor.

All over the forest-covered mountains armies of hewers hacked all day, and the noise of the axes and the crash of falling trees never ceased until the sun went down. Scores of thousands of men ran hither and thither, bearing burdens from place to place, and in the immense stone-pits countless num-

bers of workers quarried huge blocks of unbroken stone. But in the place where the mighty Temple was slowly arising from the ground, there was no sound of hammer, nor axe, nor tool of iron, for iron was used in war, while the Temple was a house of peace. Everything was prepared before it was brought, and the beams and the stone blocks needed only to be fitted into their places.

For seven long years the work went on. And God spoke to Solomon, saying, "Concerning this house which thou art building for Me, if thou wilt walk in My ways, and obey My Laws, and keep all My commandments, I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake them." Solomon understood, that it was not enough for the people merely to build a Temple; they must also obey the Law of God, for God does not value the outward show if the heart is not faithful and obedient to Him.

At last, the magnificent building was completed with its flight of steps, its inner and outer courts, its porch, its many chambers, its walls of carved cedarwood, overlaid with gold, its great sanctuary with the golden candlestick and table of gold, the Holy of Holies, where the Ark was to stand under the broad wings of the golden cherubim.

Then King Solomon assembled all the elders of Israel, the heads of tribes, and the

chief men, and all the children of Israel, and he proclaimed a feast of fourteen days. In the presence of all the people, who stood in a silent, reverent mass as far as the eye could reach, the priests brought up the Holy Ark and placed it in the Temple. And a great cloud of glory descended upon the Temple, and entered the Holy of Holies.

Then the King turned to the people, and blessed them all, and prayed, and spread out his hands before the altar, saying,

"Hearken Thou, Oh God, to the prayers of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray in this place, and hear Thou in Heaven.

"Judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous.

"When Thy people are smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, when they turn again to Thee, and confess Thee, and pray to Thee in Thine house, then hear Thou in Heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people. . . . for they are Thy people, and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest forth out of Egypt."

And Solomon blessed the people, and said, "Let your hearts be perfect with the Lord, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments." And the King, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifices before the Lord. So they dedicated the Temple, and hallowed

it to God. There was great feasting and rejoicing for fourteen days, and the people blessed the King, and went to their homes rejoicing.

What a glorious beginning this was! With peace, and great wealth, and a contented people, and the glory of God dwelling in the Temple, Solomon might have built up a nation strong and united, under one firmly established line of kings, without civil wars or foreign wars. But did he do this? We shall see what happened.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

How different was the life of King Solomon from that of his father, David! Solomon was born a prince of a mighty kingdom; David was born a poor shepherd boy. Solomon was petted, and served, and loved, without doing anything in particular to earn it; David, who conquered the giant, and defeated the Philistines, was hated, betrayed, and exiled. David suffered so much, from persecution in his youth, and from family griefs in his old age, that he learned to depend on God with all his soul; he was faithful and unselfish, sacrificing himself for the good of his people. But Solomon, who never had any misfortune, did not sympathize with his people, nor did he feel the great need of God which David felt, and which kept David's life so holy and beautiful.

Great was the earthly glory of Solomon; he maintained a large army of trained soldiers, he built up a fleet, he obtained fourteen hundred chariots of war, and had twelve thousand war-horses. He forgot that the great thing

which made Israel one mighty people was not their military power, but their love of God, and their loyalty to His Law. It was their faith in God which gave them such hope and strength that no other people could conquer them.

Wise as Solomon was, he did not understand this. He not only increased his military forces, but also married the daughters of many foreign kings and princes, hoping in this way to keep the foreign nations friendly to Israel. It was against the Law of God to marry heathen women, but the King thought that the expected good results would excuse the sin.

But what happened?

When the king went one day into the lovely palace which he had had specially built for the daughter of the king of Egypt, whom he had married, he found her very mournful, because she was not able to worship the idols of Egypt, which she had been brought up to believe were the true gods. She begged Solomon to let her have a temple built, in which she could do honor to her gods. At first the king refused, but she wept, and insisted, and said it was such a little thing to him, and such a big thing to her, that he was not able to refuse her. So the result of marrying this heathen princess was, that a temple of idolatry was actually built on the soil of Israel.

Naturally, the other princesses also declared they must have temples for their particular gods. One after another, heathen temples sprang up in the holy land where Solomon's Temple had been dedicated to the one God.

Worse than this, Solomon's heathen wives persuaded him to do honor to their idols, Weakly yielding to their desire, the king went to their temples.

God was greatly angered with this terrible and foolish sin; the Angel of the Lord appeared to Solomon, and said,

"Since thou hast done this thing, and hast not kept My covenant, and My commandments, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Yet in thy lifetime I will not do it, for David thy father's sake, but I will rend it from thy son. . . . But I will leave thy son one tribe, for David My servant's sake, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

Thus the troubles of the Israelite monarchy began. In order to pay for Solomon's magnificent palace, for his marvellous jewels, his rich garments and the garments of his thousands of servants, to feed and lodge his countless horses, and to maintain his great army, the people were mercilessly taxed. Year after year their burden was increased, until they did not know where to turn for

money to pay it with. They were depressed and dissatisfied. They saw that the King was not true to God; some of them lost their feeling of loyalty to him, others followed his example and worshipped idols. Some obeyed the Law; many did not. And the feeling of union which David had worked so hard to create throughout the twelve tribes, gradually melted away. Israel became again, in spirit, a group of separate tribes, instead of one mighty people, for their faith in God and their loyalty to their king was weakened.

The tribes of Judah and Ephraim especially were always strong against each other; each wanted to be the leading tribe of Israel. Instead of working for the good of the whole nation, these two tribes were always quarrelling and trying to outdo each other.

Perhaps you will think, "What difference did it really make, if the people lost this feeling of union?" Do you remember the story of the bundle of sticks? When they were all tied up in one bundle, no one could break them; but when they were untied, and taken apart, each stick was easily broken. No one could conquer Israel when they were one people, but when they were separate tribes, it was not so hard to overcome each tribe by itself.

Now you will see how they became separated.

When King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam inherited the throne. And the hearts of the people were sore and rebellious, because of the way in which Solomon had oppressed them. A man named Jeroboam became the leader of the dissatisfied portion of the people.

Rehoboam went down to Shechem with his court, in great splendor and excitement, to be anointed and crowned. But the people clamored for Jeroboam, who had been forced to flee to Egypt. When he returned, they asked him to speak to the king for them, so that he might rule them more mercifully.

So Jeroboam, leading a tremendous crowd of people, went to the king at Shechem, and coming up respectfully to him as he sat on his white mule with golden and purple trappings, he spoke in the name of the people, and said,

"Thy father burdened us heavily with taxes and with forced labor. Now therefore, if thou wilt make our burden lighter, we will serve thee." The new king turned to look at his advisers, and then said, hesitatingly,

"Come back in three days, and I will give you an answer."

Jeroboam and the people went home. And the young king consulted the wise old men of the court, who had served his father Solomon, and said,



REHOBAM REJECTS THE OLD MEN'S ADVICE

"How do you advise me to answer these people?"

"If thou wilt be the servant of thy people, and wilt serve them, and speak good words to them, then they will serve thee forever," replied the old councillors.

The king thought a while, then he turned to the young nobles, who had been his companions from childhood, foolish and selfish fellows.

"How do you advise me to answer the people?" he demanded.

"Why," they exclaimed, "tell these insolent people who dare to demand promises of you that you will not lessen their burdens but will increase them. Then they will know that you are master, and they are only your slaves!"

This silly and haughty notion pleased Rehoboam much better than the wise and considerate ideas of the old men. When Jeroboam and the masses of people came back, in three days, and waited in anxious crowds for the answer, this is the reply that King Rehoboam sent them:

"My father made your burden heavy, but I will add to it new burdens; he whipped you with whips, but I will whip you with scorpions!"

A shock of surprise and anger ran through the people when this cruel reply was an-

nounced to them. For a minute they were quite silent, then a low, deep murmur arose that soon swelled into a thousand-voiced roar of rebellion, and the foolish king was startled as he sat in his palace.

"What have we to do with David and his descendants?" they shouted in fury. "Why should we be ruled by this son of Jesse? To your tents, O Israel!"

And with this cry, the indignant people scattered and went to their homes. The ten tribes of Israel revolted, and chose Jeroboam to rule over them instead of the son of Solomon. So Rehoboam ruled only over one tribe, the tribe of Judah, according to the word which God told Solomon.

Thus the monarchy of Israel was split in two; its strength was divided, and wasted in civil conflict, and the slow downfall of the people of God began.



JUDAH AND ISRAEL

MAP 3

JUDAH AND ISRAEL

KING SOLOMON'S reign was a glorious one, but the people were so heavily taxed that they became poor, and after the King's death there was a revolution, and the kingdom divided. Jeroboam, leader of the rebels, became ruler of the Ten Tribes of Israel, and the other part, called Judah, remained faithful to Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Now the strength of the people was split in two, and from now on the foreign nations found it easier to fight the Hebrews.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HOW THEY LIVED IN THOSE DAYS

IN THE fairy-tales, they tell about a wonderful magic mirror. Looking into this mirror, you would see, not your own face, but whatever you were thinking about while you looked. Just imagine that you have got one of these mirrors! Wouldn't you like to take a peep into those faraway days, when your great-great-great-great-grandfathers and grandmothers lived in the land of Israel in the time when Solomon was king?

First we'll look and see what the ordinary people of the kingdom were like. See how they pass by in the mirror—thousands of them, wearing simple garments and leather sandals, guiding their ploughs through the fields, pressing out the grapes in the wine-vats, scattering the seed in the furrows, or gathering in the olives from the stretches of gray-green bushes that cover the mountain. In the cities, they sit at their carpentry benches, or cobble sandals, or weave garments, or copy out manuscripts, or follow any one of a thousand different occupations.

But there is a look of anxiety and dissatisfaction in their dark eyes. They are troubled, because with all their hard work they can scarcely make enough to support themselves and to pay the heavy taxes to the king. The ancestors of many of them once had large farms, where they sowed their seed and reaped their harvests and had plenty to live on. Why is it that these people are now so poor?

The reason is, because other people did not obey the Law of God, which is a law of unselfishness and kindness. The Law says that if a man is forced to sell his land, the family of the buyer must return it to the family of the seller after fifty years. Certain farmers had bad crops, or were robbed, or fell sick, and had to sell their land in order to get money. But those who bought their land calmly refused to return it when the fifty years were up. Thus some families grew richer and richer, and their estates grew greater and greater, while others became so poor that they had to hire themselves out as laborers, or even sell themselves as slaves! Although the Law commanded that slaves should be set free after six years' service, their owners found all sorts of excuses for not freeing them.

This is why we now see in the mirror a different class of people—haughty, proud-

faced men and women, wearing long trailing robes of finest white linen, with cloaks of scarlet and with jewels of gold in their hair, well-fed and healthy, with soft white hands that have never done a stroke of work. These are the wealthy owners of large estates. By fair means and foul means, they have become rich and powerful.

"But," you say, "why didn't the poor farmers go to the judges and get back their land? And why didn't the slaves appeal to the courts of justice, and obtain their freedom?"

Because the judges, it is sad to say, wanted to be rich themselves, and they took bribes and rich presents from the wealthy landowners, and then gave decisions in their favor. They were not just to the poor, who could not reward them.

"But then," you exclaim, "if I were one of those poor farmers or one of those slaves, I would have gone straight to the king, and told him how wicked the landowners were, and that the judges took bribes! He would not have let the poor people suffer such bad treatment!"

Just peep into the magic mirror again! Here is the great king, seated on his golden throne, under a splendid canopy, in his palace; surrounded by wealthy noblemen, who are his friends and servants. Rows and

rows of tall guards with glittering spears prevent strangers from entering the palace. The king is busy planning new stables for his war-horses, or new palaces for his wives; he has forgotten that he was made king in order to serve the people; he thinks that they were made in order to serve him, to pay for his luxurious dwellings, and provide him with glory and wealth. It never troubles him to think that his glory does not put food in the mouths of his hungry people, or that his horses are better fed and lodged than thousands of his subjects. So you see it would not have been possible for you to go to the king and tell him your difficulties, for he would not have cared.

But there were some men who did insist on reaching the king's presence and warning him of the misfortunes that his bad management would bring upon Israel. They were men who loved God, and devoted themselves to the study and the teaching of His Law and He inspired them with His wisdom. Although they saw the evil ways of the people, and saw them bowing down to idols and disobeying the Law, they always remembered what Israel had once been, and they never stopped trying to make the people return to their faith in God.

When they found that a poor man was being unjustly treated, they went to the

courts and took his part, and tried to force the judges to be fair to him; when they found poor widows and orphan children being neglected and ill-treated, they defended them and helped them.

Naturally these men were not liked by the rich people or by the judges or by the king. They helped to make the king's subjects discontented with evil government, and sometimes the king became very angry at this, and would order these noble, unselfish men to be caught and slain. But in spite of this, the king himself knew in his heart that they were right in everything they said and did, and so he feared them, and sometimes listened to them and took their advice.

These wonderful men were called prophets, because they were so faithful to God and studied the Law so devotedly that God revealed Himself to them and told them His will.

The marvellous books that they wrote—you can read them in your Bible—are still treasured by the whole world, Jew and Christian and Mohammedan alike, for they are so beautiful, so true, and so inspiring. Although the Temple is destroyed, and the great golden throne with its golden lions on each step, which King Solomon was so proud of, was captured and broken to pieces, and although the Jews today have no armies and

no war-horses and no land, yet the works of the prophets remain among the glories of the world.

The words of Samuel had come true in every respect. The kings of Israel worshipped idols, and their people followed their example. When the prophets preached against the evil doings of the kings, the kings would send bands of soldiers to imprison or slay them. But they could not destroy them all; new ones were forever springing up. These prophets realized the wickedness of the rich and the injustice of the government; they longed to bring the people back to God, and so urged the kings to give up their ambitions of conquest and military power, and to return to the simple, grand, unselfish ideals of former times.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE COMING OF ELIJAH

YOU remember how the children of Israel revolted from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and formed a separate kingdom called Israel, under Jeroboam. Jeroboam said to himself,

“If the people go to Jerusalem to make sacrifices, their hearts will turn again to their lord Rehoboam and they will kill me, and return to him.” So the king made two calves of gold, and said to the people, “It is too much trouble for you to go to Jerusalem; here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” And he set up one calf in Bethel, and the other in Dan, and the people worshipped them. And he chose priests who were not of the house of Levi, and changed the dates of the holidays.

Jeroboam made a great sacrifice before the golden calves. But a prophet came up to the altar, and he cried out,

“Altar, altar, behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon this altar shall be burnt the false priests who make offerings upon it.”

Jeroboam angrily stretched out his arm, and ordered the soldiers to seize the prophet. But as the king spoke, his arm withered up, and he had to beg the prophet to pray for him, so that it might become cured.

When Jeroboam died, his son Nadab reigned; he was just as bad as his father. There was no order or peace in the land. Conspiracies and revolutions were daily affairs. Nadab was murdered by a man named Baasha, who became king in his stead. Baasha's son, Elah, came to the throne after him, but was murdered with all his family by Zimri, his servant. Zimri reigned one week, and was slain by Omri. When Omri became king, he established the capital in Samaria and was worse than all the others that went before him, but it remained for his son, Ahab, to be the worst of them all.

Not only did Ahab commit all the crimes which the other kings had committed, but he married a heathen, Jezebel by name, daughter of the king of Sidon, and he built an altar to Baal in Samaria, and he worshipped Baal. Many of the people were very angry, and more and more prophets denounced his crimes; but Ahab only laughed at them, or caused them to be killed.

But there was one prophet so great, that even the shameless Ahab could not destroy him. This prophet was Elijah.

One day, as Ahab sat feasting with his wicked courtiers, the shaggy, ill-clad figure of Elijah came stalking into the banquet hall. His eyes darting light on every side, the prophet exclaimed in tones of fury,

"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these seven years, except according to my word."

And all the rivers and streams and brooks dried up, and there was no rain. Ahab sent men to slay Elijah, but God warned His prophet, and he fled to the brook Kerith, and dwelt there, and the ravens of the wilderness brought him food. And Elijah dwelt in the house of a widow, and as long as he lived there, she had plenty of water and grain; and when her son died, Elijah prayed, and God gave the child life again.

Three years passed, and Ahab still searched for Elijah to slay him. Then God said to Elijah, "Go, show thyself to King Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."

Elijah at once went down from the brook of Kerith, and set out for the palace. On his way, he met one of the king's ministers, a man named Obadiah; he was a good man, who served God. Elijah told him to go to the king and say that the prophet was coming.

But Obadiah was afraid.

"How have I sinned," he exclaimed, "that



ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS

thou wouldst cause the king to slay me? Was it not I who saved a hundred of the prophets, when queen Jezebel sent soldiers to kill them? If I tell the king thou art coming, perhaps the spirit of God may cause thee to go elsewhere; then the king will slay me." For it was Elijah's habit to travel about, removing suddenly from one place to another.

But Elijah promised that he would surely go to the king. So Obadiah told King Ahab that the prophet was coming, and Ahab went to meet him.

The king gazed at Elijah with fear and hate, as he said,

"Art thou he who troubleth Israel?"

"I have not troubled Israel," said Elijah, sternly. "Thou and thy family, ye have troubled Israel, for ye have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim."

Elijah longed for some way to make the people realize the power of God, and the falseness of the idols. A great idea came to him; he was quite certain that God would show the people His greatness by means of a miracle, so he said,

"Send, and gather all Israel to Mount Carmel, and all the prophets of Baal also."

So all the children of Israel, and four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, gathered together upon Mount Carmel. And Elijah spoke to the people, and said,

"How long will ye waver between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal be god, then follow him." The people did not answer. And Elijah caused them to prepare two sacrifices, one in the name of Baal, and one in the name of the Lord. And he said,

"Let the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal call upon Baal and I alone will call upon the Lord, and the god which answereth by fire, let him be God." And the people said, "It is well spoken; so be it."

So the priests of Baal began to call upon Baal, and to cry out, and to leap about on the altar. And at noontime Elijah mocked them, and said,

"Call loud, for he is a god; perhaps he is asleep, or he is busy."

And the priests of Baal cried out, and cut themselves with knives and lancets until the blood rushed out, for this was one of the customs of the idolaters. And so they went on until midnight, but no flames came upon their altar.

Then Elijah said to the people, "Come nearer." And all the people moved nearer to him. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, and he repaired the altar of God which was broken down, and he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces

for the sacrifice, and caused water to be thrown over it. At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah came near to the altar, and prayed,

"Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that these people may know that Thou art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."

So he stood, a dark figure against the red sunset, his arms raised to heaven as he prayed.

Wondering, doubting, the people watched the altar of God. Would the fire come? Was Elijah the prophet of the *true* God? . . . Moments passed; then a great, rumbling shout arose from all the people; a flame had darted among the wood of the sacrifice; in a minute the whole altar was ablaze, and the smoke of the sacrifice ascended to Heaven.

With triumphant joy Elijah gazed out over the people, and they fell upon their faces and worshipped, saying, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" And Elijah commanded them to slay all the vile priests of the idols; and the people slew them.

Then Elijah sent his servant to gaze toward the sea; and the seventh time the

servant went, he saw a little cloud. And Elijah bade the people go down from Mount Carmel, for it would soon rain. And soon the heavens were black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. The drought and the famine were over, and the people rejoiced, and worshipped God.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE PROPHECIES OF ELIJAH'

WHEN the king told the wicked queen Jezebel how Elijah had caused the death of four hundred and fifty priests of Baal, the queen was furious. She at once sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them that is slain."

Elijah knew that it was the queen who really ruled, and not the king, so he arose and fled for his life, and he went to Beersheba.

The wicked King Ahab owned a large estate, in which stood his palace. He had vineyards and fields in plenty. But there was one vineyard, near to his house, which belonged to a man named Naboth. The king thought that if he had this vineyard, it would just round out his land. So he sent for Naboth and said,

"Give me thy vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee a better vineyard for it; or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money."

But Naboth answered, "The Lord forbid that I should sell the inheritance of my fathers to thee."

Ahab turned angrily away, and went back to his palace, where he sat brooding and sulking; and he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and refused to eat.

"Why art thou so sad, and why dost thou not eat?" asked Queen Jezebel.

"Because Naboth refused to sell me his vineyard," answered the king.

"Art thou not the king of Israel? Arise, eat, and be cheerful. I will give thee the vineyard," answered Jezebel.

Then the wicked queen wrote letters to the elders and to the nobles of the city where Naboth lived, ordering them to accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king; and she told them to get two wicked men to swear that they had heard him. The nobles obeyed; poor Naboth was accused, condemned, and stoned to death. Then Jezebel said to Ahab, "Now you can take possession of the vineyard, for Naboth is dead."

Ahab got up cheerfully, dressed, and went down to see the vineyard and to make plans for turning it into a garden of herbs. And the voice of God came to Elijah, saying,

"Go down to meet Ahab, in the vineyard of Naboth; he has gone down to take possession of it."

Elijah arose, and went down to the vineyard. There was the wicked king, walking about, rubbing his hands cheerfully. Suddenly he saw, standing before him, the tall, roughly clad figure of the man whom he feared most in the world, Elijah. The face of the prophet was stern as death as he shook his staff in Ahab's direction.

Startled, Ahab stood still. As soon as he could manage to speak, he said, slowly and bitterly,

"Hast thou found me, Oh mine enemy?"

"I have found thee," answered Elijah, in a terrible voice that made the king shudder. "Because thou hast sold thyself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and I will take away thy posterity; in the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick up *thy* blood, even thine!"

A trembling seized upon all of Ahab's limbs, as he heard this terrible decree; some faint realization of the crime which he had committed entered his soul, and he tore his garments, and went home sorrowfully, and put on sackcloth, and repented. Because of this repentance, God told Elijah that He would not slay all of Ahab's descendants while the king still lived. But the prophecy in regard to Ahab's death came true, for he was slain in battle and dogs licked up his blood.

When Ahab was dead, his son Ahaziah came to the throne. He was just as bad as his parents; he did evil things and he worshipped idols.

One day, as Ahaziah was resting against the lattice work of a window in his palace, the lattice broke; the king fell through to the ground, and was seriously hurt. His servants ran to pick him up.

"Go," he gasped, "send messengers to the priests of the god Baalzebub, in Ekron, and bid them ask the gods if I shall recover from this hurt."

Quickly the messengers ran on their way to Ekron. But God had already spoken to Elijah, and had told him to meet the messengers, and give them a message from God. So Elijah went to meet them, and he stopped them, and said,

"Go back to the king who sent you, and say, 'Is there no God in Israel, that thou must send to inquire of Baalzebub?' Therefore, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not arise from the bed which thou liest on, but shalt surely die."

When the messengers returned, and told the king, Ahaziah sent soldiers to Elijah to order him to go to the king. But Elijah called down fire from heaven to destroy the insolent soldiers. Then he went fearlessly to the king, and repeated the prophecy. And as he spoke, so it happened; and Ahaziah died.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE DEATH OF ELIJAH

ELIJAH was a very great prophet. His faith in God was so deep that he could not understand why the people of Israel went on worshipping idols and doing evil deeds, in spite of all the miracles which had proved God's existence. He was impatient; he wanted to see all Israel pious and faithful. He did not realize that it was only very slowly, and among very few people at a time, that the improvement was taking place. Many new prophets were arising, and spreading the word of God. But Elijah was despondent, for it seemed to him that all his efforts had failed.

When he fled from Jezebel, after the slaying of the priests of Baal, he came to Beersheba in Judah. He left his servant there, and went on for a day's journey into the wilderness. And despair came upon him; he sat down under a juniper tree and prayed to God to let him die; then he fell asleep. As he slept, an angel touched him, and said, "Arise, and eat." And he saw a cake and

a pitcher of water at his head. So he ate, and drank, and lay down again. And a second time the angel bade him eat, saying, "Arise, and eat, for the journey is too great for thee." When Elijah had eaten, he was filled with strength, and he traveled forty days and nights, and came to Horeb, the mount of God, and lodged in a cave.

The voice of God came to him there, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

"I have been very jealous for the Lord," answered Elijah, "for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, and slain Thy prophets, and only I am left; and they seek my life also."

"Go forth," said the voice, "and stand upon the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind split the mountains and smashed the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake, came a fire that swept in red flames across the sky, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, came a still, small voice.

And when Elijah heard this voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave, trembling in the presence of God. For the Lord shows Himself not so much in the

miracles, such as the bringing of the drought and the heavenly flames on the altar, as in the small things, in the conscience of people, in the voice within them, that tells them of good and evil.

And because Elijah did not feel this, and was too impatient, the Lord said to him,

“Go now, and anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, and Hazael to be king of Syria, and thou shalt anoint Elisha to be My prophet.” And the voice added that Hazael would bring vengeance upon Israel, and slay the people, and whoever escaped from Hazael should be slain by Jehu; and whoever escaped from Jehu, Elisha would slay.

So Elijah departed, and went into the fields, and found Elisha, who was ploughing there. And as he passed, Elijah cast his mantle upon him. And Elisha asked permission to say farewell to his parents, and he left the fields, and went with Elijah, to serve him.

Elijah grew old, and the time came for him to be taken to God. So he went forth from among the bands of young prophets who were his pupils, and traveled a long distance, accompanied only by Elisha. And he knew that he was about to leave the earth, and he said to Elisha,

“Wait thou here, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel.”

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," replied Elisha. His heart ached to know that he was to lose his great and beloved master. So they went on together to Bethel. And a band of prophets came out from Bethel, and spoke softly to Elisha, and said,

"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master this day?"

And Elisha said, "Yes, I know it; hold your peace." For he could not enter into conversation with them, his heart being heavy with the thought of losing Elijah, and of having to bear the burden of being the chief prophet.

And Elijah said to him again,

"Elisha, wait here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to the Jordan."

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," replied Elisha, as before. So they went on, and came to the Jordan, and a group of the prophets followed them, and stood afar off.

Elijah took his mantle, and wrapt it together, and smote the waters of Jordan, and they were divided, and the two went over on dry ground. And when they had gone over, Elijah said,

"Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee."

"I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me," whispered Elisha.

"Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be as thou dost ask; but if thou dost not see me, it shall not be so."

And as they still went on, and talked, there swooped down between them a chariot of fire, with horses of fire, and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out,

"My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" For the presence of God is the true power and glory of Israel.

Then, as he stood there, alone, the heart of Elisha overflowed with grief, and he wept, and tore his garments. He took up the mantle of Elijah, which had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan, and smote the waters with it, and said,

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and the waters parted, and he went over on dry land.

When the young prophets, who had been waiting, saw him coming, they exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha!" and they bowed down to him. They begged leave to look for the body of their master, to bury it with honor. Elisha at first refused them permission, for he knew that God had taken Elijah, but they begged so long that

he yielded, and let them go. But although they searched for three days, they did not find him.

And Elisha became the chief prophet of God in Israël.



THE CAPTIVE MAID AND NAAMAN'S WIFE

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE MIRACLES OF ELISHA

THE fame of the prophets of Israel grew great, not only among their own people, but also among the heathen nations. They were the purest and bravest souls among the people; they worshipped God faithfully, in spite of the persecutions and even the massacres that the kings sometimes ordered. As time went on, their wisdom and their pure lives made the people admire them so much, that even the king dared not attack them; in fact, the kings themselves, not only the kings of Israel and Judah, but of foreign countries too, began to respect them, and to ask their advice.

It was the custom of some of the prophets to travel about the land, preaching and praying. The great Elisha, master and chief of all the prophets since the death of Elijah, journeyed all the time, from place to place.

He passed frequently through the town of Shunem, where dwelled a rich family who were faithful to God. One day, the wife of the owner of the house invited Elisha to come

in, and rest himself, and eat; and from that time on, she never failed to offer him refreshment and rest.

She even thought of a very kind and considerate plan; she caused a little chamber to be built on the roof of the house, with a bed, a table, and a chair, so that Elisha might be able to stay in their house as long as he wished, and at any time, and not be disturbed by the noises of the house.

Elisha was pleased, and in order to reward the good woman, he prayed to God to grant her a little son, for she had no children. The woman was wonderfully happy to have a child, and she loved her little son dearly. But one day, a terrible thing happened; the boy grew ill and died.

Yet his mother did not weep or grieve. She laid the little body down, and mounting her ass, traveled straight to Mount Carmel, where Elisha dwelt at the time, and she fell down and touched his feet, and wept, saying, "Did I ask thee for a son?" for she meant, "Why did you pray God to grant me a son, if he was to be taken away again?"

Elisha understood that the child was dead; he arose, and went back to the woman's home, and carried the child up to his chamber. And he prayed, and breathed upon the boy's mouth, and eyes, and hands, and the cold flesh gradually grew warm again with life,

and when the woman came upstairs, her son was alive once more!

The story of this miracle was soon known far and wide, and everybody wondered, and they respected Elisha more and more. Naaman, the captain of the Syrian army was a mighty man, much honored by his people and his king, but he was afflicted with leprosy. Now the Syrians had captured a little Hebrew girl, who waited on the wife of Naaman. One day, as Naaman's wife sat grieving over her husband's sickness, the little girl said,

"Would that my lord Naaman were with the prophet in Samaria, for he would cure him of his leprosy."

Her mistress, eager to do anything that might help her husband, caused the words to be repeated to the king of Syria. The king was pleased to hear that there was a possibility of curing his captain. So, taking it for granted that the prophet was a servant of the king of Israel, and must obey him, he wrote to Jehoram, who was king at that time, and said,

"I send my servant Naaman to thee, that thou mayest have him cured of his leprosy." And with the letter, the king of Syria sent six thousand pieces of gold, ten talents of silver, and ten rich garments.

When King Jehoram received the letter,

he was terrified. He knew he could not cure anybody, and he thought the king of Syria was only looking for an excuse to make war on him. So he tore his clothes in distress, and exclaimed,

"Am I God? can I kill and bring to life, that this man comes to me to cure his leprosy?"

In the midst of his despair, there came a message from Elisha that filled the king's heart with gratitude. "Wherefore dost thou grieve?" said the message. "Send the man to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel!"

So Naaman came to Elisha, at the head of a gorgeous procession of many servants and horses and chariots. He descended at the humble door of the prophet's house, and waited. And Elisha sent out a messenger, saying,

"Go, wash seven times in the waters of Jordan, and thou shalt be clean."

Naaman frowned with surprise and resentment. "What!" he exclaimed. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Can I not wash in *them*, and be clean?" And he turned away in a rage, and prepared to go back home.

But his servants stopped him.

"Nay," they said, "if the prophet had

bidden thee do a hard thing, wouldst thou not have done it? Since he bids thee do this easy thing, why shouldst thou not do it?"

The captain hesitated, but at last his anger cooled, and he decided to obey Elisha. He journeyed to the river, and when he came to its brink, he dipped himself seven times in the water. And behold, the diseased flesh became more clean and fresh and healthy than even before he was sick!

So Naaman returned rejoicing to Elisha, and his heart was humbled. He bowed, and spoke reverently to the prophet, and begged him to accept rich gifts. But Elisha refused, for he wanted Naaman to feel that it was God Himself, and not any work of the prophet, which had cured him. And Naaman said,

"Thy servant will henceforth not sacrifice unto any other gods, but only unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master, the king, goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship, I must likewise bow myself down before the idol. The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing."

Elisha comforted Naaman, for he did not expect this heathen officer to have enough faith and determination to offend his king for the sake of God. So the captain went away with a light heart.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, looked

longingly after the rich presents which Naaman had brought and was taking away again with him. So he ran after the captain, and the captain, when he saw Elisha's servant coming, got down out of his chariot to meet him, in order to show his respect, and said,

"Is all well?"

"All is well," replied Gehazi. "My master sent me to tell thee that two young prophets have just arrived from the hill country of Ephraim, and he desires thee to give them a talent of silver."

"One talent!" cried Naaman. "Come, take two!" And he quickly ordered his servants to put two talents of silver into two bags, and he gave them to Gehazi. Gehazi had them carried to his house, and then he went back again to Elisha. But Elisha knew what he had done, and he was very much displeased. Since Gehazi had taken the money of Naaman, he caused him also to take his disease, and from that day on Gehazi became a leper.

Time passed, and the king of Syria made war upon Israel. But Elisha by his prophecies warned the king of Israel, and saved the Israelite army many times. So the king of Syria determined to capture Elisha. He sent an army to besiege the city of Dothan, where the prophet was staying. But Elisha prayed, and the Lord smote the Syrians with

blindness, and they were all led captive into a city of Israel. But when the king of Israel asked Elisha if he should slay the Syrians, Elisha replied,

“Nay, thou shalt not smite them.” For God had captured them, not the king. So King Jehoram of Israel prepared food for the captives, and fed them, and sent them home, according to Elisha’s orders. After that, the Syrians did not attack Israel for a long while.

The respect and confidence which even foreign people had for Elisha was so great by this time, that when the king of Syria fell sick, he at once called his chief minister, whose name was Hazael, and said,

“Take a rich present with thee, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord through him, and find out if I shall recover of this sickness.”

The minister set off, with his servants and with forty camels laden with presents, and he came and stood before Elisha, and said to him,

“The king of Syria hath sent me to thee, to learn if he will recover from his sickness.”

“Go back,” said Elisha, “say to him, he will recover; but yet the Lord hath shown me that he will surely die.” •For Elisha understood the soul of Hazael, and he knew that, although the king’s sickness would not cause his death, the minister intended to

murder him. And Elisha looked steadfastly into the eyes of Hazael, till the man blushed red, and could not meet his gaze. And Elisha wept.

"Why weepeth my lord?" exclaimed Hazael.

"Because I foresee the evil that thou wilt do to Israel; their strongholds thou wilt burn, and their young men thou wilt slay. . . . The Lord hath shown me, that thou shalt be king over Syria."

A look, half of eagerness, half of shame, came over Hazael's face, as he turned to go. And as soon as he came to the palace, the king of Syria asked him, "What said Elisha?"

"He said that thou shalt recover," answered Hazael, without a tremor. The next morning he took a cloth dipped in water and smothered the sick king with it, and he became king in his place.



AMOS

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE HEBREWS ARE EXILED

THE country of Israel was always at war, either with Judah, or with Syria, or with Edom, or worse still, among themselves. After the death of Ahab, King of Israel, Jehu conspired, and drove with his soldiers to the city of Jezreel, where the wicked queen Jezebel was. Jezebel painted her face, and dressed her hair, and looked out of the window. Then Jehu called to his servants to throw her down. The servants obeyed him; they went up and seized her and threw her out of the window; she was killed, and the dogs ate her flesh. This was the end of one of the wickedest women that ever lived, but her daughter Athaliah, who had married the king of Judah, still lived, and she brought great evil on Judah.

Jehu, who was now king, also worshipped the golden calves; and in punishment for this, the Syrian King Hazael attacked and ravaged the land, just as Elisha had prophesied. After Jehu, Joash the son of Jehoahaz ruled over Israel; he was wicked, yet he

trusted the prophet Elisha. When Elisha was ill, Joash went down to see him, and wept over him, and Elisha prophesied that he would smite Syria three times. And Elisha died, and was buried.

After Joash, his son Jeroboam II ruled over Israel; he too, was very wicked, but God took pity on the suffering people of Israel, and he caused Jeroboam II to win great victories over Syria, so that the people might not be altogether destroyed.

But conspiracies and disturbances continued. What was the reason? By the time Jeroboam came to the throne of Israel, the country was wealthy and powerful; he conquered as much land as David, he had a great trade with many countries, and he had a strong army. But the wealth belonged to only a few people who were at the top; the majority of the people were poor and suffering, and the rich people oppressed them all the time; no matter how much they were wronged, they could not get justice from the king or from the judges and the courts of law. So there was bitterness and despair in the hearts of the people.

But not all the people followed the wicked example of the kings and the nobles. Many among the poor still remained faithful to God; they would not disobey His law, nor worship in the groves of the idols, but they

led good, honest lives. One day, a young shepherd who had been thinking deeply about the condition of the people, and the dangers which they were facing on account of their wickedness, left the quiet fields and mountains where he had been tending his flocks, and came into the noisy, wicked cities, that were full of selfish rich and miserable poor. He preached to the people, and prophesied that great evils would come upon them as a result of their idolatry and hard-heartedness.

"Thus saith the Lord," exclaimed the shepherd-prophet, whose name was Amos. "I will send a fire and an earthquake upon the land, and it shall devour the palaces, and the king shall go into captivity, together with his chiefs, and the land shall be destroyed, with noise, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

"I will not turn away the punishment of Israel, saith the Lord, because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. . . . They tread upon the poor, and take from him burdens of wheat. Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. . . . I will not accept your peace-offerings . . . but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. . . . Ye offered me sacrifices in the

wilderness for forty years, but ye have worshipped images which ye have made. . . . Therefore I will cause you to go into captivity, saith the Lord." Thus spoke Amos, and pleaded with the people to return to God.

But the people did not listen. Earthquakes came, famines came, armies attacked and invaded the land, and then for a short while the people prayed to the true God, not because they really meant to reform, but because they were afraid He would punish them still more. But as soon as the danger was over, they slipped back into their old ways. The rich went on selling the grain at terribly high prices, and when the people could not pay it, they took their children for slaves, and would not listen to the pleadings of the heart-broken parents. The rich people built new palaces and wore splendid jeweled clothes, and gave great feasts in honor of their vile idols. But the poor did not have enough to eat.

And another prophet came to warn the people; his name was Hosea. He begged them to change their evil ways and to return to God; he told them that God would surely forgive them and help them if they would stop worshipping idols and begin once more to obey His law. But it was no use for Hosea to preach to them; they did not listen.

So God's punishment began to come upon the people of Israel. The king of Assyria sent his powerful armies against Israel; and the people, in terror at the very sight of his innumerable and well-equipped troops, yielded at once, and became his subjects; and the king, too, whose name was Hoshea, became his subject; and he was the last king of Israel.

They promised the king of Assyria to send him tribute every year, and that they would not conspire against him with any other king. But they did conspire; they sent to the king of Egypt and planned to betray Assyria to him. When the king of Assyria found this out, he decided that the only safe thing to do was to remove the Israelites from their own land into another country, nearer his capital, where his army could watch them. Down swept the Assyrian armies upon Israel; the whole nation was taken captive, and by tens of thousands the people were removed from their land, and made to settle down elsewhere.

You see, if the people had listened to the prophets, they would never have lost their strength of mind and body so completely; and if they had been true to their promise, they would not have been removed from their land.

The king of Assyria did not wish the cities to remain empty; he had only carried off the

people in order to destroy their power. He now gathered great numbers of people from among the other nations which he had conquered, chiefly the Cuthites, and sent them to live in the land of Israel.

These people believed that every country or province had its own special god, so they worshipped God as the particular god of Israel; the Assyrian king did not object, he even sent them a Jewish priest to teach them about God. Although they kept on worshipping their idols as well, they felt the greatness of the God of Israel, and feared Him, and obeyed the Law in many ways. When, long years later, the Israelites returned to the land, and began to rebuild the Temple, these people, who became known as Samaritans, wanted to be allowed to help in the holy work.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

IN THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

WHAT was happening, all this time with the other half of the Hebrews, the half that remained faithful to Solomon's son, Rehoboam? You remember how part of the people revolted from Rehoboam, and became a separate kingdom under Jeroboam, and called themselves the kingdom of Israel; it is the history of this kingdom of Israel which you have been studying till now.

Those who remained faithful to Rehoboam became the kingdom of Judah, and we are going to study about them now. Their history is much pleasanter than the history of Israel, because the Judeans were not as bad as the Israelites. It is true that they too sinned, and worshipped false gods and did evil things, but many of their kings were good and pious, and would not let the people forget their God.

You know that when brothers are not friends, they fight each other more bitterly than strangers who are enemies; and so it was with Israel and Judah. They were almost always at war with each other, just as if they did

not have enough trouble fighting the heathen nations. But at least, in the time when Ahab was king of Israel and Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, they decided to join forces and band together against foreign enemies.

But there was one thing that the king of Judah had not considered when he made this alliance. Jehoshaphat, when he came to the throne, was a very good man and a good king; he destroyed the idols and the groves in which they were worshipped; he sent teachers and priests throughout the land to teach the people how to observe the Law; he chose honest judges, and saw to it that they did not take bribes, but judged rich and poor alike. He prospered greatly; many foreign tribes brought him tribute, and he had a large army.

But in his desire to strengthen his people by joining with Israel, he did not stop to realize that the loss would be greater than the gain. To join with wicked and unholy people would surely result in evil. The strength of Judah was in their purity and faith in God, not in their armies; when they joined with Israel, they joined with wickedness, and so really weakened themselves. But Jehoshaphat had also become less religious and less obedient to God; he disobeyed the Law by letting his son marry Ahab's daughter, and you will see, later on, what terrible results this marriage had.

Having joined forces, the two armies with their two kings set forth to fight the king of Syria, who was attacking them. And King Ahab of Israel said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah,

"Shall we go up against the town of Ramoth-gilead, and take it away from the king of Syria?"

"I am as thou art," answered Jehoshaphat. "My people are as thy people, and my horses are as thy horses. But inquire, I pray thee, what is the word of the Lord."

So Ahab ordered all the prophets of Israel to come to him, and tell him whether he would be victorious or not. Now these prophets were not true prophets; they were not truly religious and pure hearted, and they flattered the king, and told him, "The Lord will deliver up the city to the king."

But Jehoshaphat looked at the prophets, and he felt that they were not true prophets of God, and, although he had joined with Ahab, he was still faithful enough to the Lord to want to consult a real prophet. So he said,

"Is there not another prophet, of whom we may inquire the Lord's will?"

"There is another," said Ahab, frowning, "and his name is Micaiah. But I hate him, for he never prophesies good things about me." But, seeing that Jehoshaphat desired

to consult him, Ahab sent for Micaiah.

When the prophet of God stood before the two kings, as they sat on their thrones at the gates of the city of Samaria, King Ahab spoke to him, and said, roughly,

"Micaiah, shall we go to battle or shall we not?"

"Go," said Micaiah, "and the Lord shall give thee the city."

But there was something sarcastic in the prophet's expression which did not satisfy the king.

"How many times must I bid thee to tell me only the truth?" he exclaimed.

Micaiah had merely repeated the prophecy of the others, because he knew the king would be angry if he told the truth. But now he said, boldly,

"I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, 'These men have no master.' And God put a lying spirit into the mouths of the other prophets, so that thou mightest go to battle and be slain."

The face of Ahab grew pale with rage and terror, while the other prophets murmured loudly in indignation. And the false prophet Zedekiah came up to Micaiah, and smote him on the cheek, and said, jeeringly,

"Which way went the spirit of the Lord, when it left me to go to thee?"

Micaiah remained still, with folded arms, and answered with patient scorn,

"Thou shalt know that on the day when thou goest to hide thyself from the enemy."

"Put this fellow in prison," exclaimed King Ahab. "Feed him on bread and water until I return in peace."

"If thou return at all," replied Micaiah, steadily, "then the Lord hath not spoken by me." And he submitted to the soldiers who put chains upon him and carried him off to prison.

But in spite of his scornful words, Ahab was very much afraid. He disguised himself as a common soldier before going into battle, so that the enemy might not recognize him. But the will of God was fulfilled; a Syrian soldier, seeing an Israelite pass him by, shot at him, without knowing it was the king, and wounded him to death. So the king died in his chariot, and the blood which fell from his wound was licked up by dogs, according to the prophecy of Elijah.

And the battle increased, until the news spread that the king of Israel was slain. Then in wild terror the Israelite soldiers threw down their weapons and fled from the field, and the battle went against them. But Jehoshaphat king of Judah was not slain; he returned in peace to his city, Jerusalem.

The great wrong which he had done in

letting his son marry the daughter of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel was still to bring the greatest evils upon Judah, for this daughter, whose name was Athaliah, was even worse than her bad mother. It was only by marvellous good fortune that the kingdom of Judah was saved from utter destruction, as you will see.



JOASH MADE KING



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

HOW THE PRINCE WAS FOUND

THIS is the story of a little prince who was hidden away and then found again, just at the right time! And this is how it all happened.

You remember that the son of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. When the old king died, his son came to the throne. But he soon died, too, and Athaliah, mother of the new king, did most of the ruling. The new king did not live long, either, and another branch of the family became rightful heirs to the throne.

But the proud and ambitious Athaliah could not bear the idea of losing her power. Secretly she sent her soldiers to the palace; they went to the apartments of the royal family, and suddenly drawing their swords, slew every prince of David's blood.

Happy and triumphant, the wicked Athaliah declared herself queen and ruler of Judah, and no one dared to dispute her right. She did just as she liked, killing and imprisoning

all who displeased her, and encouraging the worship of idols and performing all the shameful and immoral ceremonies of idolatry.

But she would not have felt so safe if she had known of one thing! Within the secret chambers of the disused Temple (whose doors she had caused to be closed and guarded by troops of soldiers, to prevent the faithful from worshipping there), a little boy was growing up in concealment. He was Joash, the last remaining prince of David's line. While the brutal soldiers of Athaliah had been searching through the palace and murdering the princes, the dead king's sister had run to one of the chambers, snatched from his cradle a little baby, and had fled away with him to the Temple. This baby was the prince Joash. He was carried into the chamber of the Levites, and a faithful nurse was brought there to take care of him. Years passed on: nobody but the priests and Levites ever came to the deserted Temple, and they were loyal to David's line, and would not betray the prince. So he grew up, hidden from all eyes, and the priest Jehoiada taught him the Law of God.

For six years Athaliah continued her evil, cruel rule without opposition. Bitterly though the people hated her, they dared not rebel for fear of civil war because there was no heir to the throne.

But the high priest, Jehoiada, was not idle. He went secretly and silently about, among all who were dissatisfied with Athaliah, and gradually began to hint that there might yet be left one prince of David's blood, and if there were one, would they rather be ruled by him than by Athaliah. The answer was nearly always, "Yes, gladly!"

It was years before there were enough of the soldiers and people in sympathy with Jehoiada's plans, but at last, when the little prince was about seven years old, the high priest felt that the time had come to put the horrible queen off the throne.

He gathered together all the soldiers of the guard, and ordered the captains to go fully armed, and surround the Temple, and he gave them for weapons the spears and shields of David's army, that were kept in the Temple. When the troops were all spread out before the Temple, and thousands of people had gathered, breathless with hope, behind the soldiers in the great square, the doors of the Temple opened, the high priest came out, and behold! he led by the hand a little boy, crowned and richly dressed. And while he called out, "Behold the King!" the people burst into roars of joy and welcome, for they knew that the wicked reign of Athaliah was over! And the trumpets blew, and the people shouted, and the soldiers clashed

their swords, while the little king, hardly knowing what it was all about, looked on, smiling!

Suddenly a shriek of rage and terror was heard; the queen Athaliah was standing near the Temple door, crying out, "Treason! Treason!" Jehoiada signalled to the captains of the army; they seized her, and took her away, and put her to death, in punishment for all the murders she had committed.

And the high priest spoke to the people, and asked them if they would return to God, and worship Him alone; and they bowed their heads, and said yes. So he made a covenant between them and God, and also between the king and the people. Then he stepped down among them, and led them to the temple of the idol Baal, and they seized stones and sticks and weapons, and attacked the temple, and broke down its pillars and its walls, and dashed the images of the idols on the ground until they were smashed to pieces, and they dragged out the wicked priest of Baal, and slew him.

And they brought the king from the Temple of God, with a great procession and loud rejoicing, and he came to the palace, and sat on the throne of his fathers. And Joash was a pious king; he followed the advice of the high priest, and served God, and did what was right.

He caused the Temple to be repaired, but unfortunately there was not very much money in the royal treasury, so the high priest placed a box at the door of the Temple, and people dropped money in it. When enough money had been collected, the priests employed carpenters and builders and masons, and they bought freshly hewn stone and timber, and repaired the Temple. But Hazael, king of Syria, threatened to attack Jerusalem if they did not give him a great deal of gold, and as they were not able to fight him, they had to take all the treasures from the rich men and from the palace, and from the Temple, too, and give it to him in order to be left in peace.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE MIRACULOUS VICTORY

THE happiness and righteousness of the people of Judah in the reign of King Joash did not last long after his death. When his descendant, King Ahaz, came to the throne, the faithful worshippers of God were horrified to hear that he ordered the Temple to be closed. Altars for the worship of idols again sprang up everywhere, and at these altars even little children were offered up as sacrifices to the fire-god.

By now, the power of Assyria had grown very great, and the king of Assyria threatened to conquer Judah. What was to be done? There were three things Judah could do:

1. Join with Israel and Syria against Assyria; or,
2. Join with Assyria itself; or
3. Not to depend at all on arms and wealth, but to trust in God, to obey His Law, to become righteous and so deserve His help. As He had always helped them in the past, so He would help them again if they would trust in Him.

There lived in Judah a great and noble prophet called Isaiah. Isaiah pleaded with the king and people to obey God and trust in His help and then they need not fear any human enemy.

But King Ahaz and his ministers thought they were wiser than the great prophet. Israel and Syria, who were also afraid of the powerful Assyria, wanted Judah to join with them against Assyria. But Ahaz thought, "No, because then Assyria can conquer us all. I will do a cleverer thing; I will join with powerful Assyria; then I will be safe."

Isaiah was deeply grieved when he heard of Ahaz's foolish plan; he explained that if Ahaz joined Assyria, Assyria would simply first conquer Syria and Israel, and then turn and conquer Judah. But Ahaz would not listen. He sent gold and other presents to Assyria, and made friends with them.

Assyria was quite satisfied. Meanwhile, Israel and Syria had collected armies to fight Judah because Judah would not join them. They had left their own lands undefended. So Assyria had a good chance to attack the lands of Israel and Syria.

The king of Assyria with his great armies soon laid waste their lands, till there was no food to eat nor water to drink in Israel and Syria.

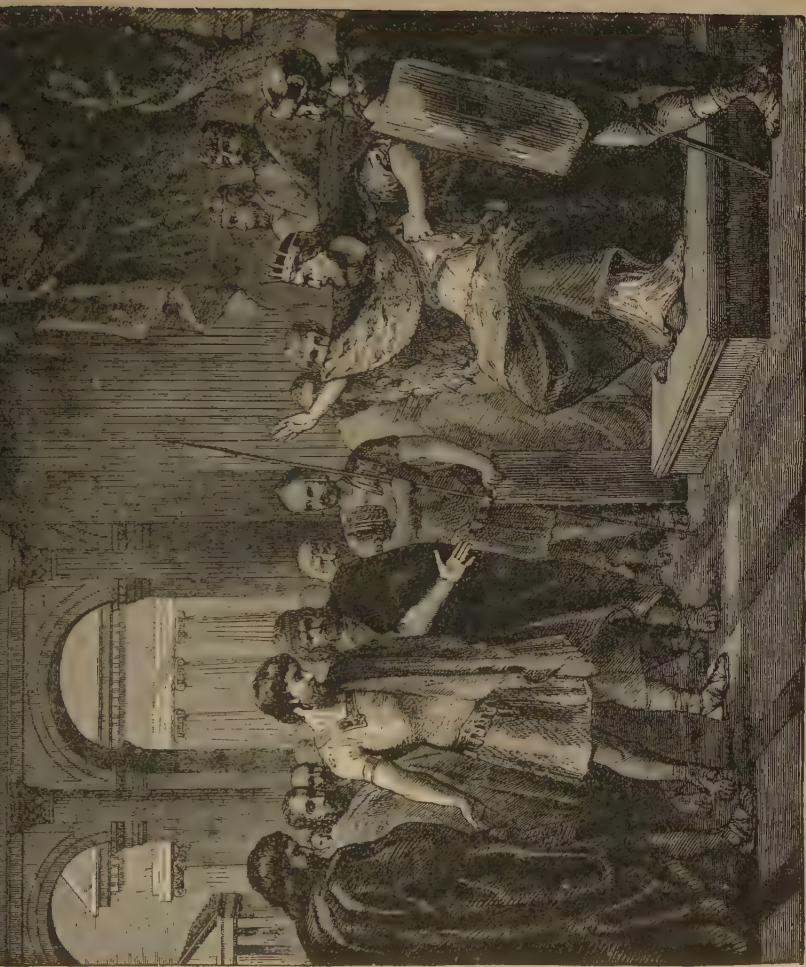
So Ahaz felt that he had done a wise

thing in joining Assyria. But as time passed, and the people of Judah had to keep paying heavy tributes of gold to Assyria, they began to wonder if their king really had acted wisely.

The wicked Ahaz died and his son, Hezekiah, became king. Hezekiah was a good man and tried to worship God faithfully. He destroyed all the idols he could find and he broke down their altars. But he could not change the hearts of the people. And the prophet Isaiah saw that the only hope of saving Judah lay in gathering the faithful ones of the younger generation, and teaching them the true Law, and showing them how to teach it to others.

Even Hezekiah, who honored Isaiah, did not have confidence in him. Assyria was losing some of its strength and a few of its subject-nations revolted successfully. So Hezekiah, seeing that the people were sick of paying tribute wanted to revolt also.

Isaiah urged him to keep still and do nothing and to wait for God to free Judah. But Hezekiah would not listen to him; he began to prepare for rebellion. At once the king of Assyria, whose name was Sennacherib, sent an army against Judah and prepared to destroy the land. So, in order to save the country, Hezekiah had to promise to pay a much larger tribute than before.



HEZEKIAH IS TOLD THE ASSYRIAN KING'S MESSAGE

Even now, Hezekiah was not willing to listen to Isaiah. He joined with other states for one last attempt to free themselves from Assyria. But Sennacherib sent another very large army against Judah; they destroyed forty-six cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem. And the chief Assyrian officers cried out to the people who had gathered in great dread and anxiety upon the walls of the city:

"Thus saith the great King of Assyria: in what dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? . . . Have any of the gods of the nations saved them from my power? Neither can your God save you from me."

Now Hezekiah was frightened. What was to be done? His own army was helpless to save Judah. In his despair, he tore his garments and put on sackcloth and went to see Isaiah.

Isaiah had heard the boastings of the Assyrians. He knew that God would punish them for their blasphemy against Him. And he spoke these words which God put into his heart:

"O Asshur, the rod of Mine anger,
In whose hand as a staff is Mine indignation!
I do send him against an ungodly nation,
And against the people of My wrath do I
give him a charge,
To take the spoil, and to take the prey,

And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit he meaneth not so,
Neither doth his heart think so;
But it is in his heart to destroy,
And to cut off nations not a few. . . .

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks. For he hath said:

By the strength of my hand I have done it . . .

And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples;

And as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken,

Have I gathered all the earth. . . .

Should the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?

Should the saw magnify itself against him that moveth it? . . .

Therefore will the Lord, the Lord of hosts, Send among his fat ones leanness;

And under his glory there shall be kindled A burning like the burning of fire. . . .

And it shall come to pass in that day, That the remnant of Israel,

And they that are escaped of the house of
Jacob,
Shall no more again stay upon him that
smote them;
But shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy
One of Israel, in truth.
A remnant shall return, even the remnant
of Jacob,
Unto God the Mighty.

The watchers of Israel and the crowds who waited all night upon the wall now prayed to God in their despair, and forgot all about their useless idols. As soon as it began to grow light, they gazed in fear over the field before the city, in which the great army of Assyrians were encamped, half hoping that God had caused the enemy to depart. For in their heart of hearts, they trusted in God. The enemy had not gone, but they lay strangely still. The sun came higher and higher, gleaming on the bridles of the sleeping horses and the shields and swords of the men. But nothing moved. And at last the Judeans saw, with a great thrill of amazement, that the Assyrian army lay dead on the field! The Lord, had smitten them with a plague in the night.

King Sennacherib, with a part of the army which had not been stricken, escaped and went home. But no sooner had he arrived in his city, than his own sons attacked him

and slew him. So Judah was at peace for a time.

One day, King Hezekiah fell sick, and Isaiah prophesied that he would die. Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and wept, and prayed to God, saying,

"Oh, Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight."

So God took pity on Hezekiah, and told Isaiah that Hezekiah would live another fifteen years. When Isaiah brought the good news, the king could hardly believe it, and he asked for a sign. Isaiah prayed and God caused the shadow on the sun dial to go backward ten degrees; then Hezekiah believed and rejoiced.

When he was quite well again, the King of Babylon sent him presents and a letter congratulating him on his recovery. Hezekiah was so pleased that he entertained the ambassadors with great pomp and showed them all the treasures of Judah—his silver and gold and spices and precious oils and armor—everything he possessed, and he was pleased when the ambassadors admired his treasures.

But Isaiah was grieved and angry. All this wealth was nothing to boast about; anybody could possess wealth and more than

Judah had. But only the people of God possessed the true Law and the pure faith. Since Judah boasted to Babylon of wealth, Isaiah prophesied that one day Babylon would come and take away all these treasures, and the sons of the people also would be taken captive, and the only thing which would be left to Judah would be the glory of the Law which nobody could ever take away.

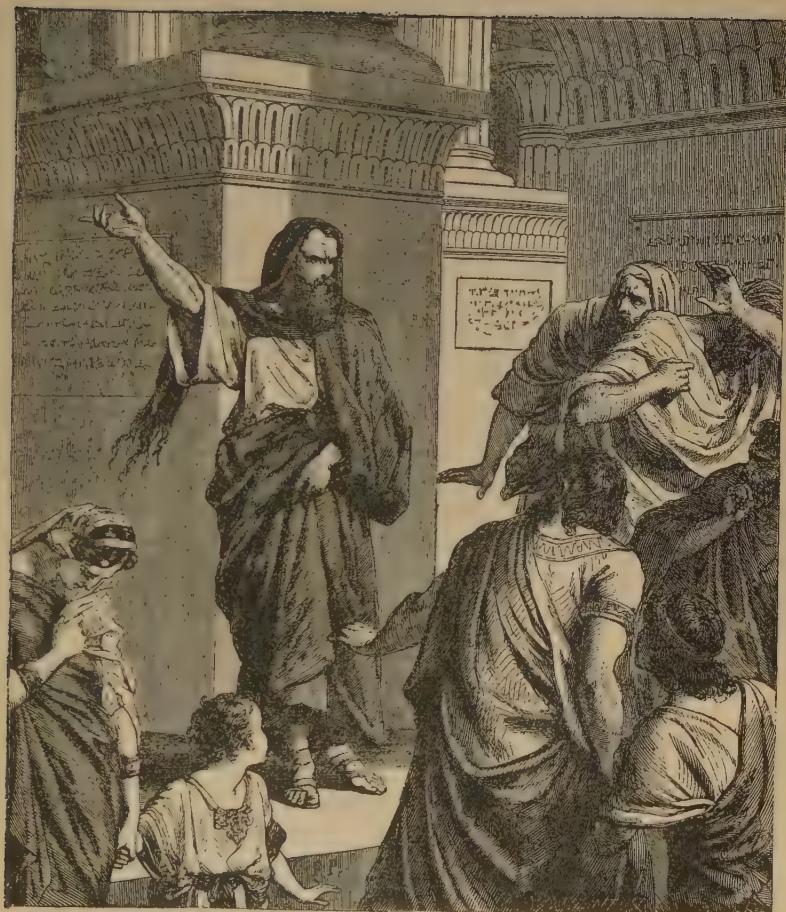
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE GOOD KING JOSIAH

THERE lived in Anathoth a young man named Jeremiah, one of a priestly family. Since his childhood he had felt the glory of the true God. As he grew older and understood the wickedness and disobedience of the people of Israel, he grieved deeply and wondered if something could not be done to make them change their evil ways.

As he walked in the hills one day, thinking of God, he saw an almond tree that was just beginning to bring forth new leaves. It made him feel how great was the power of God, which was causing the new buds and leaves and fruit to grow on the boughs that had been bare and black all winter; and he felt that God would give new strength and life to His people, just as He gave it to His trees. Another day he had a vision of a boiling caldron nearly upset by a strong wind; he knew this was a sign that the people of Judah would be overthrown by foreign armies if they did not return to God.

One clear, cool night, Jeremiah was walk-



JEREMIAH PREACHING IN THE GATE OF THE TEMPLE

ing about, thinking and thinking about the people of God and praying that something would be done to warn them of the ruin which their evil ways would bring on them.

Then the voice of God came to him, and said,

"Behold, I have appointed thee to be a prophet." Jeremiah was terrified. He, a prophet? He was such a young, inexperienced man; how could he preach and prophesy, he thought. So he prayed, and said,

"Oh, God! I do not know how to speak; I am only a youth."

But God comforted and encouraged him, saying, "Be not afraid, for I will deliver thee." So Jeremiah accepted God's decree and became a prophet to warn the people.

At this time, the kingdom of Assyria which had been so mighty, began to lose its power, and Judah began to feel more secure in its independence.

Savage tribes, called Scythians, swept down from the north on Assyria and threatened to sweep down on Judah, too.

So Jeremiah began to preach and to warn the people of the danger that was coming and to plead with them to turn back to God, so that He might deliver them from the Scythians. But the people kept on worshipping idols and committing sins.

Nearer and nearer came the tribes of the

North. The people who lived near the borders of Judah became afraid and left their farms and their homes, and went to Jerusalem for safety. In deepest grief Jeremiah foresaw the destruction of his people, and was forced to prophesy their doom. But how could the people change their evil ways when they did not even know how to serve God? They had disobeyed for so long, that they had forgotten how or what to obey.

So God helped them. King Josiah was doing his best to purify the land and he decided to repair the Temple. While the workmen were busy cleaning out and beautifying the holy building, they found an old parchment scroll, covered with dust. They brought it to the king. It was the Book of the Law which had been placed in one of the corner-stones, perhaps by Solomon himself! Josiah ordered that the book should be read to him and he wept and tore his garments as he listened, for he saw that he and all Judah were doing the very opposite of what God commanded. He caused the people to gather before the Temple and the book to be read to them; the king begged them to obey its commands and he caused the Passover to be celebrated with the utmost splendor and scrupulous obedience to the Law.

Assyria was by this time practically destroyed, and Egypt was the most powerful

enemy of Judah. Josiah decided to fight Egypt, but he was killed in the very first battle, and Egypt became the overlord of Judah. Soon Babylon conquered Egypt and Judah became a subject province.

The new king of Judah, whose name was Jehoiakim, submitted to Babylon, and never worried about anything as long as he could live a luxurious life.

But neither king nor people were obeying the Law with their hearts; they only followed the forms of sacrifice without any real love for God. Bitterly Jeremiah warned them, that it was no use to offer sacrifices as long as they were doing evil in their everyday lives and he prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed at last, if they did not change their hearts. The people were furious at this prophecy and would have slain the bold prophet, but a few wise men defended him and saved him. A short while later, the chief officer of the Temple caused Jeremiah to be beaten and cast out of Jerusalem, and his own cousins tried to slay him.

What could Jeremiah do? He dared not stop prophesying, but if he returned to Jerusalem, he would be killed. So he called his faithful pupil named Baruch and dictated to him the prophecy of destruction. The brave Baruch went to the king in his palace and read the prophecy to him. The king's face

turned black with rage; he took the scroll out of Baruch's hand and tore it apart and dropped it, leaf by leaf into a pot of burning coals. He did not want to go back to God, he mocked at the threats of the prophet.

The next year, the king of Babylon prepared his army and came down to attack Jerusalem. Jehoiakim had died and his son, Coniah, reigned. Jeremiah warned the young king to submit peacefully to Babylon. But he would not, until the king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and forced the Judean royal family to become his subjects.

Jeremiah mourned bitterly to see his prophecies coming true.

"I am pained in my very heart," he exclaimed. "I cannot hold my peace because my soul hath heard the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war."

"Thus hath the Lord spoken: The land shall be desolate, yet will I not make a full end. . . . The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and the bowmen; they shall go into the woods, and climb up on the rocks, every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall dwell therein. . . . Woe is me!"

But it was too late now for the people to repent. For many, many years the prophets had been warning them, and pleading with them to cease their idolatry, and their immorality, and their cruelty to the poor, but they

had never listened. Now the time was come for them to be captured and scattered, because they could no longer be truly called the People of God.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE REVOLT THAT FAILED

ALTHOUGH the prophecies of Jeremiah had always come true, the people still would not listen to him, but preferred to listen to the false prophets, who always told them what they liked to hear.

Nebuchadnezzar, unlike most other kings of his time, had not been a cruel conqueror; he allowed the Judeans to remain in their city, and he even let them have their own king, Zedekiah, to govern them. But Zedekiah was weak and foolish; he listened to everything that his nobles told him, and always agreed with them.

The nobles were tired of being captive-nobles; they were proud, and they wanted to feel independent. They were also angry at having to pay large sums of money as tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. So they urged the people and the king to revolt against Babylon. The kings of Egypt and Tyre, who were also subject to Babylon, encouraged Judah to rebel and promised to help them.

Great meetings took place in the Temple,

and there the false prophets came and urged the people to revolt. But Jeremiah also came, his white beard streaming in the wind, his eyes full of anguish. He knew that Judah had not repented, that the hearts of the people were full of pride and selfishness, and that they could not drive back the conquerors, because it was God's will that they should be captives in punishment for their sins.

"Serve Babylon, and live!" he pleaded. "Wherefore should this city become desolate?"

The false prophet Hananiah got up, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, God: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years I will bring back . . . all the captives of Judah." And Hananiah broke the bar on the neck of Jeremiah, as a symbol of the broken yoke of Nebuchadnezzar.

"Thou hast broken a bar of wood; thou wilt make instead a bar of iron," said Jeremiah. He meant that at present, the yoke of captivity was light, but if they rebelled, they would be treated far more severely, and Jerusalem would be destroyed. That same year, Hananiah died, in punishment for his false prophecy. Yet still the proud, impatient nobles refused to listen to Jeremiah.

Judah prepared for battle. They collected all their warriors into the city of Jeru-

saalem, drove out the foreign garrison, and closed the gates of the city, and refused to send the tribute to Babylon. Seeing the warriors leaving their wives and children, and preparing for battle, Jeremiah could not help trying to encourage and inspire them, though his heart felt very bitter, for he knew it was all in vain; they would be conquered.

As soon as the news of the rebellion came to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was very angry. He had been mild to the Judeans, but now he determined to punish them. He sent a large army against Jerusalem. The army encamped around Jerusalem, and besieged it. For a whole year no one could go in or out, and it looked as if the city would have to yield. The princes and nobles and the false prophets repented; the rich people became kind to the poor, and helped them; the slaves were freed and treated like friends. Suddenly came the news that the king of Egypt had sent a great army to fight Nebuchadnezzar. The troops who were besieging Jerusalem were recalled. The rebellion appeared to be a success!

The gates were flung open with wild rejoicing, and for a few days everyone was happy. Then the nobles recaptured their slaves, took away the gifts they had given to the poor, and began to live the same cruel, selfish, idolatrous lives as before. Bit-



EXILES IN BABYLON



terly Jeremiah reproached them; he warned them that the troops would return, that the city would be destroyed, for they were too wicked. The princes were furious with him. One night, as he was going home, a sentinel seized Jeremiah, and hustled him into the house of an enemy of his, and he was thrust into the damp, dirty cistern, and chained there, as a prisoner.

Then, one day, the sentinels who walked about on the walls of the city, saw a dust arising in the distance, and the glitter of spears; the ground began to tremble with the tramping of thousands of feet. The Babylonian army had conquered the Egyptians, and were coming back! The gates of the city were at once closed again. The invading army came and encamped outside the walls, keeping stricter watch than ever, so that food could not come in and people could not go out. Many warriors died; people starved or died of the diseases that always follow famine; and in six months the Judeans had no more strength left to protect the city and the Babylonians broke in. They killed or enchained all whom they met; they marched, jeering and shouting, into the Temple, and slew the prophets, and stole the golden vessels. The king, who had tried to escape, was captured and sent to Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was furious with him for

having rebelled; he caused all his sons to be slain before his eyes, then he had him blinded, so that he soon died. Orders were given to set fire to Jerusalem. For four days there was nothing to be seen but thick clouds of smoke pierced with red flames. When the fire went out, Jerusalem was a mass of black and broken ruins. Thousands of Judeans were carried away captive, but Jeremiah was released, and very bitterly he mourned over the destruction of his beloved city and the misery of his people.

“For these things I weep;
Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with
water;
Because the comforter is far from me. . . .
My children are desolate,
Because the enemy hath prevailed.”

The king of Babylon did not wish to destroy Judah; he gave them a governor, one of their own people, a man named Gedaliah, a good, kindly man, who admired Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar gave orders that Jeremiah should be well treated, and he sent him presents. All those who had tried to escape at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, but who had not left their homeland, were allowed to gather together, and to form a colony under the rule of Gedaliah. They settled down, and formed a small, prosperous city at Miz-

pah. They planted and reaped, and had plenty of food, and lived in peace.

Then a wicked, rebellious man, named Ishmael, who had been a chief over a number of soldiers, came to the colony; he promised to be a faithful subject, but as soon as he got the chance, he attacked Gedaliah and slew him. The rest of the colony were in despair. They sent for Jeremiah to ask his advice, whether they should leave the country before Nebuchadnezzar could punish them, or whether they should stay. After many days of prayer to God, Jeremiah answered: "Stay here." They would not accept the prophet's decision. They emigrated to Egypt and Jeremiah and his disciple, Baruch, had to go with them. The fugitives settled in Egypt, and were treated with kindness by the king. But they returned to idolatry, and would not listen to Jeremiah's pleadings that they should serve God only. Although he called a large meeting of all the people, to try to make them return to God, they would not be persuaded.

And in a short while, the old prophet Jeremiah, one of the greatest and most unhappy of all the prophets, died and was at rest after a lifetime of struggle and misery, loneliness and bitterness. But his book, and the lamentations which he sang, are among the most beautiful works in all literature.



JUDEA AT THE TIME OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

MAP 4

JUDAH AT THE TIME OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

YOU remember that the people would not listen to the warnings of the prophets, who told them that if they did not repent their sins they would be captured by their powerful enemies. The prophecy came true; Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah and carried off the people to Babylon. For seventy years they remained captives there, but were finally allowed to return and build the second Temple.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE RETURN TO THE LAND

AFTER the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's army, the Judeans lived as exiles in Babylon. The king was not cruel to them, and his son, King Evil-Merodach, was even kind. They were allowed to have land and to carry on business, and they soon felt as comfortable as they had been at home, except for the fact that they were not a free people. But the rich Jews were cruel to the poor ones, and they worshipped the idols of Babylon.

Gradually the people began to realize that the prophets had spoken the truth, and so they must really have been inspired by God. They began to study the writings of Jeremiah, which the disciple, Baruch, had compiled into a book, and their hearts were touched, and they felt a great longing to return home and to worship God. They celebrated as fasts the anniversaries of the siege and fall of Jerusalem, (the tenth day of Tebet; the seventeenth day of Tammuz and the ninth day of Ab) and of the death of Gedaliah, (the third day of Tishri)

the governor of the colony of Mizpah. They met in the House of Prayer to pray and to mourn for the fall of Jerusalem.

Cyrus, the king of Persia, which was a very powerful country in those days, attacked Babylon and conquered it, just as he had conquered many other nations. He decided to let the captive Judeans return to their land. With great rejoicing the Judeans heard the proclamation: they were allowed to return, to rebuild Jerusalem and to build the Temple again! Not only this, but the precious vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from the Temple were to be given back to them.

Many of the people began to prepare for departure. For fifty years they had been dwelling in a strange land, and now they had to leave their homes and their accustomed dwelling-places, and return to a ruined city. Yet they were full of joy and enthusiasm. Of the great nation of Judah, not quite fifty thousand people decided to go back; they went in a happy procession, led by Zerubabel, a descendant of the house of David, and Joshua, descended from the last High Priest. And as they went they sang.

"When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like unto them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then

said they among the nations, the Lord hath done great things with these."

It was a six-hundred mile journey from Babylonia to Judea; when they arrived, they found the Samaritans, the Cuthites and the Idumeans were inhabiting part of the land. The Judeans went to Jerusalem. As soon as they got there, countless numbers of Jews who had been hiding or wandering about restlessly all over the land, came quickly to join them.

The very first thing which Zerubbabel and Joshua attended to, was the building of an altar, in preparation for the rebuilding of the Temple. A solemn ceremony took place, and the foundation stones of the Temple were laid again. But now, the Samaritans and Cuthites came to Jerusalem, asking to be allowed to help in the rebuilding of the Temple, and to be received as Jews. The leaders of Judea did not want to accept these half-heathen tribes, and they refused to let them become Jews. The Samaritans went away very angry, and did all they could to make trouble for the Judeans. Meanwhile, the richer Jews were behaving with selfish meanness, worrying only about building splendid homes for themselves, and there began to be quarrels and anger among the returned exiles.

At last, the Temple was finished and dedi-

cated, and there were great feasts and rejoicing. Seventy full years had gone by since the destruction of the Temple of Solomon; this second Temple was not as large and magnificent as the first, but it was a place holy to God, and God did not need a magnificent Temple. He desired only the faithful obedience and worship of His people.

As time passed, the neighboring nations became more hostile to Judea, and the Samaritans and Cuthites, who had not forgotten that their offer to help had been refused, tried to give them as much trouble as possible. The leaders of Judea determined that the best thing to do, after all, would be to make friends of the Samaritans, and even to intermarry with them. The next step was to be equally friendly with the Ammonites and the Moabites.

You know that if you take a vessel of clear water, and mix it with a vessel of ink, the result will be neither water nor ink; one cannot either drink it, or use it to write with. So the children of these intermarriages were neither Jews nor heathens, belonging neither to one race nor the other. All sorts of idolatrous ideas crept into the religious ceremonies of the Jews. The customs of the people were mingled with the customs of the foreigners, and the result, in general, was very unfavorable.

There lived in Babylon a great many Jews who had not gone home to Judea. Among these was a man named Ezra, descended from the high priest Hilkiah; he had studied the law in every detail and it grieved him to see the carelessness which the people showed in regard to the decrees of God. He himself began to set the example of a perfect follower of the Law, and he began to teach it and explain it to the people. Then he decided to go to Jerusalem and try to make the people learn and understand the Law. So he went to Jerusalem. Sixteen hundred members of distinguished families joined him, and many Babylonian Jews who could not or would not join him, sent rich presents for the Temple, for he had stirred their hearts with a desire to show their loyalty to God.

Ezra was greatly grieved when he saw to what an extent the pure blood of the Jews had been mingled with that of heathens. He felt that the result would be that the Jews would be swallowed up among the other races. Weeping and praying before the Temple, he urged the people to stop these foreign marriages, to leave their heathen friends and relatives by marriage. The people were deeply distressed, but they felt that Ezra spoke the truth. They vowed to return entirely to God, and they separated

from all who were not of their own blood, and in the future kept clear of intermarriage and friendship with heathens.

The Samaritans were furious; they attacked Jerusalem, and drove out the inhabitants. The Jews sent to the Persian court for help. The king's cupbearer was a Jew named Nehemiah; he was a faithful follower of God, and was so good and clever, that the king made a great favorite of him. When he heard the dreadful things that had happened in Jerusalem, he begged the king for permission to return there, and rebuild the city walls, and to restore order. The king granted his wish, but made him promise to return when the work was finished. Loading him with presents, and giving him soldiers, letters and money, the king sent him to Jerusalem as governor of Judea.

He at once began to examine the condition of Jerusalem, and to make plans for repairing the walls and the ruined houses. The Samaritans tried to interfere; they laughed at the work, and wrote to the king of Persia telling him that Nehemiah was a traitor who wanted to become king of Judea. But Nehemiah simply made the workmen work faster, keeping them busy day and night, and soon the city was completely repaired. Nehemiah sent out a call all over Judea, inviting the people to come to Jeru-

saalem to live, because a great many had fled at the time of the attack. Many of them responded, and in a short while the city was filled with as many inhabitants as before.

Now he set to work to change the spirit of the people. He called together the rich families, and pleaded with them to show greater kindness and consideration to the poor. They listened to him, and took an oath to treat the slaves and the poor people fairly. Then he decided to help Ezra in his work of making the Law known and beloved by all the Jews. He called a meeting of the whole people. A stand was erected in the midst of the huge assembly, and here Ezra came and stood up, and read out loud the Book of the Law, and as he finished each portion, the Levites explained it briefly for the benefit of those who could not quite understand it. As the people listened, they were filled with enthusiasm and love for their Law; they wept, and promised that they would sincerely try to obey every word of the Law. Then Nehemiah formed a great procession of the people, to consecrate the walls of Jerusalem; with trumpets and waving of banners, and songs of praise, they celebrated the purifying of the city.

So the Jewish people came back to their homeland; not all of them came, but only a part, according to the prophecy, "and a

remnant shall return." But those who came were earnest and sincere; they tried to be good and to serve God. And with the building of the new Temple, a new era of
(Judaism began.



RETURN OF THE EXILES

MAP 5

RETURN OF THE EXILES

CYRUS, King of Persia, conquered Babylon, to which Judah was now subjected. So Persia became ruler over Judah. King Cyrus allowed the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

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